DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 283 207 CS 210 653

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TITLE Language, the Forgotten Content.
INSTITUTION Virginia Association of Teachers of English.
PUB DATE 87
NOTE 163p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052) -- Viewpoints (120) -- Collected Works - Serials (022)
JOURNAL CIT Virginia English Bulletin; v37 n1 Spr 1987

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC07 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Autobiographies; Childrens Literature; Critical Reading; Curriculum Development; Diachronic Linguistics; Dialects; Educational History; Elementary Secondary Education; *English; *English (Second Language); *English Curriculum; *English Instruction; English Teacher Education; *Grammar; Higher Education; Japanese; Language Acquisition; *Language Arts; Language Attitudes; Language Role; Learning Processes; Literary Criticism; Metaphors; Semantics; Skill Development; Spelling; Standard Spoken Usage; Teaching Methods; Vocabulary Development; Writing (Composition)
IDENTIFIERS Language Sensitivity

ABSTRACT

The ways that students can learn about the nature of the English language and develop a sense of excitement about their language are explored in this focused journal issue. The titles of the essays and their authors are as follows: (1) "Language, the Forgotten Content" (R. Small and P. P. Kelly); (2) "What Should English Teachers Know about Language?" (J. C. Stalker); (3) "What Should Language Arts Teachers Teach about Language?" (C. Harrison); (4) "Finding Order to Language in the Elementary Classroom" (E. H. Thompson); (5) "Grammar: How and When" (J. H. Bushman); (6) "Standard English, World English, and Students' Rights to Their Own Language" (F. A. Cronin); (7) "Dialects: Resolving the 'My English-This English' Conflict" (J. Baker); (8) "Noah Webster: The Legacy of 'The Prompter'" (L. Alvine); (9) "It's 'Just' a Matter of Semantics!" (M. Kaiser); (10) "The Phenomenon of Metaphor" (D. Gilmore); (11) "A Way Out of the Spelling Mess" (K. Gill); (12) "Studying Personal Names" (B. Born); (13) "Vocabulary Study as Performance" (E. Miller); (14) "Teaching the History of English" (A. Reddy); (15) "Test for Teachers" (S. E. Burkhardt); (16) "Language in Context: The Child, the Critic, and the Language of Literature" (B. A. Lehman); (17) "Sensitivity to Language" (M. J. Weiss); (18) "Teaching High School Students about Language Acquisition" (E. A. Poe); (19) "Writing a Linguistic Autobiography" (M. A. Christiansen); (20) "Learning English with a Foreign Accent" (E. Eidman-Aadahl); (21) "A Library for Teaching about the English Language" (D. J. Kenney); and (22) "Prospective Teachers Writing to Learn Grammar" (W. Self). (NKA)

Spring 1987 Volume 37, Number 1

ED283207

Virginia English Bulletin

Language, The Forgotten Content

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Virginia English Bulletin

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

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SUBSCRIPTIONS AND ADVERTISING:

Subscription is included in the annual membership dues of $10.00. Student dues are $2.00. Membership is for the calendar year. For advertising rates, contact the Business Manager. For single copies, contact the editors.

Published twice annually by the Virginia Association of Teachers of English Language Arts, a non-profit affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English and a department of the Virginia Education Association. The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of VATE.

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VOLUME 37, NUMBER 1 SPRING 1987

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From the Editors: Language, The Forgotten Subject

Robert Small and Patricia P. Kelly

The traditional and still popular way of looking at what English teachers teach divides the subject into literature, language, and composition. We have, indeed, taught literature, though all too often we have tended to use the wrong books and to ignore the individual, personal nature of reading. But at least our claim to be teachers of literature has been genuine. And we have taught composition, though, again, often in a way that ignored the way real people write and learn to write and the reasons why they write. Still, we have taught it.

Language is, however, a different matter. The traditional program in language has been so poorly conceived that in our view it can hardly be said to have a legitimate claim to be called language study at all. Unless boring and misleading kids is all one wants from English class, the traditional language program has failed any way you look at it.

Ineffectual: The traditional program is not effective in the production of perfect spellers with extensive vocabularies, composers of clear and effective prose, or speakers and writers of only the most faultless of upper-class usage. In fact, the traditional program of dull drill on mostly useless material produces students who are not competent in any dimension of language. Nothing is more common than English teachers complaining that their students do not know grammar, despite the fact that other English teachers, in many cases their own colleagues, have tried dutifully to teach those students grammar rules and definitions. In addition, every carefully planned study of this approach to teaching language has produced the same conclusion: powerful evidence that the drill/memorization approach to language study produces no growth in vocabulary, no improvement in spelling, no greater conformity to standard usage, and no expansion of skill in composing.

Incomplete: Although the traditional language program touches on several aspects of the nature of language—word meanings, spellings, grammar rules—it also ignores many others. It condemns certain words, expressions, and constructions but rarely deals with the varieties and levels of the language, gives almost no recognition to the fact that the language has a history, and ignores how meaning is conveyed by language. Spellings of individual words are emphasized, but not much attention is given to the spelling system of English. The use of dictionaries is drilled on, but their nature and relation to what real people do in gathering words is

ignored. In fact, the traditional program overlooks more about the English language than it attempts to teach students about their language.

Shallow: Not only does the traditional program ignore whole dimensions of language; but, what it does treat, it treats in the most superficial and shallow fashion possible, both in the content that is presented and in the type of learning that it asks of the student. Think of the confused ideas about the structure of language presented in the typical high school grammar book. This grammar—sneeringly referred to by linguists as "textbook grammar"—is rejected by grammarians of all types. The shallowness does not only come from what is presented, however. Unfortunately, we rarely ask our students to understand the concepts that they study. We settle for memorization of definitions and identification—usually by rules of thumb or tricks—of types of words in exercises often comprised of unrelated sentences.

Uninteresting: The traditional program presents language as dreary, uninteresting, and pointless, as something no sensible person could possibly care to spend time with. We seem to act as if we want our students to believe that excitement and joy in discoveries about the English language are impossible except to strange, incomprehensible people called linguists. Hardly anyone can catch the excitement and fascination of language from the traditional program, and few if any students do. Consequently, the work of the linguist and the semanticist remain beyond most people's interest and understanding. Indeed, we, as teachers of the language, often seem ourselves to find language study to be dull. Those students who do develop a fascination with words more often than not do so despite the traditional program, from parents for whom word histories, puns, and puzzles are fun.

The traditional program, is, however, not the only way that language study can be approached in school. The articles in this issue of the *Bulletin* explore the question: How can students learn about the nature of their language? and the equally important question: How can they develop a sense of excitement about their language and the study of it? From these articles, it seems to us, comes a clear picture of what should replace the dreary traditional program.

What Should English Teachers Know About Language?

James C. Stalker

If you ask just about anybody on the street, or more appropriately, on the school board, what teachers should know about the English language, the answer will come swiftly and surely—grammar. The more enlightened respondents might even add that grammar is the core, but that teachers need to know something about the history of the English language as well, about how we got from Old English to modern English. We should not be surprised that the equations "knowledge about language = knowledge about grammar" or "knowledge about language = knowledge about the history of English" come so readily to mind. Two thousand years of history support the first equation, and close to two hundred support the second. Our eight parts of speech were first defined in approximately 100 B.C. by Dionysius of Thrax in order to arrest what he perceived as the deterioration of the Greek language. Through an unbroken string of translations and adaptations of his original work, his legacy, particularly the eight parts of speech, continues today in texts for classes from fourth grade through linguistics classes for teachers. Hence, to know language is to know grammar, to know grammar is to know (minimally) the eight (nine, ten) parts of speech. If people know anything else about language other than grammar (and its extension into usage judgment), they are likely to be aware that English has a history because the study of the history and development of the English language effectively began in the early Nineteenth Century and thus has had close to two hundred years to influence school texts of various kinds.

The study of language should include the study of grammar and history, but other, sometimes more effective, approaches to the study of language have developed over the last fifty or sixty years. Some knowledge of the structure of sentences in English (i.e., grammar) is useful for teachers and may (but only may) be useful for some students. We must keep knowledge of grammar in perspective, however. Linguists write books detailing complex theories of the structure of nominal and verbal complements; universities endow chairs for linguists who have made their reputations and careers on rejecting accepted grammatical theories and devising new ones. Grammar, the description and explanation of the structure of English, is an exceedingly complex endeavor. There is not yet *a grammar*, a theory (or description)

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of the structure of English (or any other language) which is fully satisfactory.

Consequently, we should be delighted if our students understand the basics of the structure of our language, not berate them because they do not understand our (frequently confused) attempts at explaining the difference between restrictive and nonrestrictive relative clauses. (Reputations are still being made on explaining the relative clause and how we can best characterize the difference between restrictive and nonrestrictive.) The study of the structure of language can surely be as exciting and rewarding as the study of the structure of a novel or a poem, but it is certainly as esoteric and demanding an endeavor as those studies. As we must accept a balance between the study of primary and secondary texts in literary studies, we must also accept a balance between the study of sentence-level structure, the study of structures at other levels, and alternate ways of studying language.

If teachers and students do not need to know only grammar, then what do they need to know? They need to know some general principles about language, and they need to explore the ramifications of those principles. They need to know

> that all languages, including our own, are in a constant state of flux
>
> that all languages are comprised of variants which are used for different purposes and enjoy different levels of acceptability,
>
> that all languages and varieties of languages serve a multitude of functions,
>
> that all languages and their varieties are orderly and, therefore, can be described and explained through complex structures, including syntax (sentence structure), but including as well phonology (the system of sounds), morphology (word structure), semantics (meaning), discourse (structures larger than the sentence), and pragmatics (language use in context).

Teachers and students who know these general principles about language and the ramifications and details of the general principles will not then possess magic wands through which they can erase bad writing or implement sure and accurate readings of poems or know how to deal with variant dialects and languages in their classrooms. Teachers and students alike will, however, have more accurate ways of talking about the problems they encounter in each of these areas and, perhaps, will appreciate the rich diversity and complexity of our language.

Language Change

The language we speak and write today began some 1000 years ago as Old English, a dialect of Old High German; developed into Middle English, the language of Chaucer; and eventually became Modern English. Along the way, English was heavily influenced by Latin, directly through borrowings from Latin during times of conquest and occupation by the

Romans both on the continent and in England, and indirectly through French, likewise during times of conquest and occupation, most notably from 1066 through the 1300's. Despite these influences, English is at base a Germanic language, not a Romance language derived from the language of the Romans, Latin. English belongs to the family comprised of German, Norwegian, Swedish, and Dutch rather than the one comprised of French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian. English shares more syntax and lexicon with French than with the other Romance languages, but that is because of a long, common history. The English and the northern French were both conquered by the Vikings during the same time (c. 900 A.D.); so northern French and Old English share historical linguistic influences other than Latin. The later conquest of England by those same Norman (i.e., North men) French insured continued contact between the two languages.

Although many of us are aware that our language has changed significantly, the implications of this progression from Old to Modern English are not always immediately apparent. The first, and perhaps the most obvious implication, but the most difficult to deal with, is the simple fact that there is some future English lying out there in the Twenty-first Century beyond our Modern English. The English we use today is destined to be obsolete in the future. Of course, no one can predict how soon we can expect such changes to be noticeable, nor predict just which features will change, nor yet predict whether the language of our great-great grandchildren will be so different that they and we could not understand each other if they are able to devise a time machine and come back to visit us. However, we can look at our present language and see examples of how our language is changing, and there are examples enough every day in print and in the conversations around us. Some of these changes are ephemeral; others will likely last a good long time.

Perhaps the easiest changes to chronicle are changes in our word stock (our "word hoard" our Old English ancestors would have said, our "lexicon" according to linguists). In quite usual fashion, several words have entered our language, or changed their meaning, quite recently, and it will be interesting to watch them just to see how long they hang around. Many of us are now trying to decide if we are *yuppies* or whether we are too old, poor, or unmotivated to fall into that category. The origin of the word has been attributed to several sources, but all are within the period of early 80's. Surely there were yuppies before 1980, but apparently we had other labels for them. How long will the word last? No one can predict. It might be around for quite a long time. After all, although yuppies will cease to be young, many will no doubt continue the *lifestyle* (yet another new word) we associate with them; and, if we forget that the *y* of *yuppie* signifies "young," we can retain the word with a more general meaning. On the other hand, as yuppies become middle aged *muppies* (*maupies*?) and, eventually old *oupies*, we may well lose the word, and it might well be a blessing.

Another word that has recently joined us is *player*. But, many of you

protest, *player* is not a new word, and in one sense you are right. However, those who watch *Miami Vice* or similar shows and are aware of the language of drug dealing, especially cocaine, know that the people who buy and sell cocaine in *kilo* lots are called *players* (probably from the earlier use of the word to refer to gamblers). Now, at least in the weekly news magazines, any person who participates in a somewhat risky venture is a *player*. The people whom the SEC found to be engaged in illegal stock market manipulations were called *players*. Likewise, the people primarily responsible for the Iranian arms deals in which the United States took part were also referred to as *players*.

One last example, *grazing*, may well outlast either of the other examples. Although I have seen it in print, I have never heard it spontaneously in conversation. The first time I encountered *grazing*, it carried the meaning "to order a selection of appetizers rather than an entree." Note that we are in a restaurant which has appetizers and entrees. The last time that I encountered *grazing*, it was defined as "to eat snacks, small meals, all day long, rather than to eat a single, main meal." Given that the sit-down family meal seems to be disappearing, *grazing* might well succeed in establishing a permanent place in our language because it will label the new, common situation. Perhaps we need the word.

The point of these examples is that the language responds to our needs. More precisely, we, the users of the language, add and delete as we must in order to talk and write about the events, concepts, and things that come and go in our lives. The basic purpose of language is to serve as a means of communication. When concepts (events, things) disappear, the words attached to them inevitably disappear. (Do you know what a *singletree* is? Exactly?) When new concepts emerge, new words or new meanings of old words emerge with them.

Other changes which are not so obvious take place too. Americans are in the midst of a shift in pronunciation of words with the vowel in *hawk*. Younger speakers, particularly in the Western states pronounce *hawk* with a fronted vowel so that it rhymes with *hock* or *lock*. Older speakers will retain a vowel which rhymes more nearly with the one in *fault*. Such changes are neither good nor bad; they simply are. We may judge the changes as good or bad according to our personal value system, but the language neither improves nor deteriorates when such changes take place. What we are seeing when we see new words and pronunciations come and old words and pronunciations go are shifts in usage—new selections being added to our language, old selections being removed—and all quite unconsciously for the most part.

What is odd about the shifts in usage is not that they happen, but that some people get so upset about them. It is clear that change is inevitable, that English will be different in the future. Our evidence is straightforward—we are not using Old English, nor are we even speaking or writing the English of our grandparents. However, those people who do get upset often believe that change and deterioration are very nearly synonymous. They

believe that the English of today is of lesser quality than that of 10 (or 20 or 50) years ago, and the language of next year will be of lesser quality than this year's English. The belief that unmonitored change will eventually destroy the language arose in the Eighteenth Century, became a belief to be reckoned with in the Nineteenth Century, and has survived lustily in the Twentieth. Those who believe that change is inevitably going to destroy English believe as well that change can be controlled, if not stopped, by prescribing a set of rules which, if followed, will insure that some changes will be arrested and others will be channeled in appropriate directions. Unfortunately for us, historical events determined that English teachers were to be the primary transmitters and enforcers of these rules.

It is not at all unfortunate that English teachers bear the burden of teaching clear and precise use of language. That requirement is a legitimate part of our professional duties. It is unfortunate that the teaching of clear and precise use of language is so frequently equated with the teaching of usage rules. A good many of the rules have nothing to do with clarity and precision; they are rules of etiquette. For example, abiding by the rule which specifies that *mad* means 'crazy' and therefore cannot be a synonym for *angry* will not insure more precise language. Following the rule might well insure confusion rather than clarity, and it will certainly mark the speaker as unnecessarily fussy about English usage. The clarity versus fussiness issue might be solved if we knew which rules to focus on. However, even those who believe in efficacy of usage rules cannot agree on which shifts in usage should be allowed to occur without comment and which should be prohibited. The result is that teachers, being unsure about the history of the development of English both structurally and sociolinguistically (how and why the syntax, morphology, and phonology changed, and how and why certain usages came to the attention of the prescriptivists), are at the mercy of everyone who accuses them of failing in upholding decent standards of clarity and precision. Knowledge about the history of the language will enable teachers to explain that English, like all languages, is in flux and to make clear why they have chosen to ignore some of these changes and focus on others.

Language Variation

The prescriptivist dicta that teachers must carry out are made more difficult because changes do not occur uniformly across the language. Because usage shifts in Britain and America have not been identical, we now have the two distinct variants, or dialects, British and American English. Likewise, the dialect of Australia and India, or any of the world varieties of English, are the result of varying changes in each country. We see the same results within a given country. The English of the United States has several distinct regional variants, as does that of Canada. Consequently, a usage rule that focuses on a particular pronunciation or morphological dispute in British English, for example, may be wholly inappropriate for American English because the choices available in the British dialect may

not be available in the American, or may express a preference for the usual British dialect choice over the usual American choice. For example, *different than* is generally an American choice; *different from* is generally British. *Different to* appears to be only British, and to proscribe it for Americans (as it is proscribed for the British) is to tell them not to do something that they are already not doing.

Prescriptive usage rules are often dialect particular and thereby support the notion that there is only one proper variety of English and that all others are somehow inferior. English teachers are, of course, well aware that there are varieties of English but do not always know how best to regard those varieties. Virginia is an obvious and good example of quite local and interesting variation. There are at least four distinct varieties of English in Virginia: the coastal "Tidewater" variety often regarded as "the" Virginia dialect; the dialect of the mountains; that of the inland southern part of the state; and, finally, that variety developing around the Washington, D. C. area.

Just as we cannot deny that change occurs, we cannot deny that variety exists. However, we can decide to judge those varieties as better or worse, good or bad, and we are frequently encouraged to do so. The judgments we make based on correctness rules of the prescriptive sort can be relatively harmless in the sense that "violators" of the rules suffer relatively minor consequences. As prescriptivists such as John Simon and Edwin Newman frequently point out to us, even our most respected authors and cultural leaders offend against every part of prescriptive rules at some time or another. The prescriptivist brush tars widely and indiscriminately and can, therefore, be more easily ignored, but the prescriptivists should not be ignored altogether. They contribute a great deal to the linguistic insecurity of everyone. Their concerns and complaints cause less social and psychological damage than other sorts of judgments do, but they are only relatively less harmful.

The judgments that are relatively more damaging are those that target the dialects of specific groups of people and characterize them as inadequate media for communication. The first level judgment is usually that the dialect of a particular group of people, for example those varieties of American English found in the Appalachian Mountains, is nonprestigious, that is, that the people who speak that variety do not wield power and influence in our society; and they are, in fact, usually the poorer and less educated in our society. The corollary is, of course, that the dialect of those who do wield power and influence is worth having, i.e., it is prestigious. Such judgments are damaging enough, but the further judgment that nonprestige dialects are more primitive and limit the communicative ability of their users lies somewhere between simplistic and unwarranted.

Language Functions

English teachers need to know that all languages come in a wide variety of forms, that the forms may not enjoy equal social status within the society,

but that they do enjoy equal linguistic status. All varieties of a given language, whether prestigious or not, fulfill the communicative functions demanded by the language community; all varieties are equally complex in their phonological, morphological, syntactic, and discourse structures. Tidewater, Appalachian, Black, or Michigander, the differences in the structural systems of dialects are far fewer than the similarities, and all such dialects can be used for a variety of functions, including education. However, it is interesting, at least to linguists, that the users of each variety seem to limit the range of cultural and linguistic functions for which different varieties and styles within varieties are used.

The same phenomenon occurs within dialects. The language we use (whatever our own dialect) for formal situations differs from that of intimate situations. The answer to a student question in class (perhaps, "What time will X be?") will tend to choose linguistic forms which we associate with the formal end of the style scale, while the answer to the same question asked by a family member at home will tend to select features appropriate to the intimate end of the style scale. ("What time will the concert be?" Public answer: "I believe that it is scheduled for 8:00 Thursday night, but I'm not certain." Family Answer: "I dunno; 8:00 Thursday I think.")

Linguists have gathered quite a lot of data on the phonological, morphological, and syntactic feature differences between dialects which are predominate in a geographical area (Boston versus Detroit) and those which are sociologically distributed (Black, Appalachian, Chicano, Spanglish). Functional differences, however, have been regarded for so long as the province of sociology or etiquette that linguists ignored that realm of language and are just beginning to look closely at the linguistic markers of functional choice.

We use language to pass along information and opinions, and we use language to demonstrate our own class membership and to judge others' class membership. However, these are not the only functions of language. The categories outlined here are certainly not the only possible ones, but they illustrate the point that language has many uses (and features which signal those uses) which we need to be aware of if we are to deal effectively with the language of our students. Information exchange, opinion expression, and social judgment are probably at the top of the list of overtly recognized functions because they are so clearly important to our particular society. (Others cultures value information exchange less than we do but care more about communicating emotional states.) Beyond these important functions for our society, we can recognize several others. Obviously, we use language to persuade. Sometimes we disguise the persuasive function as information exchange. ("Nine out of ten doctors prescribe the major ingredient in our brand of headache medicine.") Sometimes it is pure, naked emotional appeal ("Please, please, please let me go to the dance. I'll never have another date if I don't go.") Whatever linguistic form it takes, persuasion is clearly functionally different from either information/opinion transmission or social judgment.

High school teachers are probably more aware than the rest of us of the inclusive/exclusive function which language serves, simply because adolescents are so deeply engaged in marking the boundaries between their developing world and the pre-existent adult world. High school slang (which sometimes partially extends into college) functions to separate the adult and adolescent worlds; it excludes parents and teachers from the world of the teenager, and, conversely, it includes teenagers. Slang functions as a group marker, in the same way that drug language identifies drug users to each other and medical language (or maybe golf language) identifies doctors to each other. The most notable characteristic of each of these varieties is the lexical selection. They are marked by word choices which are obscure or unknown to those being excluded.

Although it is true that exchanging information as clearly and precisely as possible is among the more important functions of language, we need to recognize that language functions as well to perform the opposite task—to obfuscate and ambiguate. Political language is probably the most common example of the use of language to create ambiguity. But the "little white lies" that we tell also fall into this realm. Creating ambiguity is a legitimate and useful function of language, although we often would deny it. When we wish to be ambiguous, we build a discourse level structure, a text within a context which allows (or leads) our auditor to construct a meaning other than the one which accurately reflects our thoughts or some event. We can also choose structures at the sentence level, ambiguous or incomplete syntax (Our car is better. Than what? Apples?), or words for which it is not clear which of several possible meanings is appropriate and accurate.

Language also has a magic function. For example, language used for religious purposes clearly falls into some category other than the ones I have already mentioned, because it is language that requires special reverence, occurs in highly restricted contexts, and is believed to have effects beyond the world we can perceive through our normal five senses. Such language is often marked by the use of older morphological forms (*dost, hast, thee, thy, thine*) as well as older syntax (*goest thou* vs. *do you go?*) and older pronunciations. Children, of course, are well aware of the magic function of language. A promise is sealed with a chant: "cross my fingers, cross my heart, cross my eyes, hope to die."

Language Structure

The last principle which this article will discuss is that English in all its varieties is ordered and structured and this order and structure can be described through systems such as phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, discourse, and pragmatics. If I have been successful, the various facets of language study touched on in this article have already demonstrated that language is structured, that the structure of English is regular and can be described, and that the structure is both more extensive and more interesting than the usual narrow study of traditional parts of speech categories and traditional usage rules. Unfortunately, almost all school study

of language focuses on a limited range of language systems, specifically the lexical, morphological, and syntactic, and various disputed usages described by those systems. We study roots, prefixes, and suffixes, parts of speech, and subjects and predicates. We memorize word lists and try to remember the difference between *disinterested* and *uninterested*. But we rarely spend time looking at such words as *disinformation*. Why is it being used? How does it fit into our morphological system? What context calls for its use? What other specifically linguistic features regularly occur with it? In other words, what are the pragmatic and discourse structures which govern the choice of *disinformation* rather than *lie*, and what are the lexical and syntactic choices which accompany it? For example, are there an unusually large number of agentless passives in the text?

There are rules by which we govern our choices when we engage in a conversation. That is to say, conversations have a structure as much as sentences have a structure. Just as it is possible to characterize a sentence as "nonEnglish" because it has the structure Subject-Object-Verb ("The boy the ball hit") rather than Subject-Verb-Object ("The boy hit the ball"), so we can characterize a conversation as "nonEnglish" in which there is no obvious marker for a shift from the topic on the floor to a new one. English conversationalists must shift the conversation directly and justify the shift: "I don't mean to change the subject, but..." Of course we mean to change the subject, or we would not say "I don't mean to change the subject." Or we can turn the topic indirectly: "That reminds me of something I was thinking about the other day." However, it is not a normal English conversational pattern to simply disregard the topic on the floor and start a new topic.

As teachers, we must be aware of and study the structure of our language on a much wider front than we normally seem to. We must continue to be knowledgeable about grammar (in its traditional meaning of the study of syntax and morphology), but we must also be aware of and knowledgeable about the other structures of our language. A full understanding of how language works requires a full understanding of what language is.

A Parting Admonition

Whatever the description or explanation that linguists offer as the normal state of affairs in English, whatever the structures described and presented, it is best not to accept those descriptions as being final and definite. Language is flexible and adjustable. If we want to put our object in front of the verb, for stylistic effect for example, we can, although we may not be as easily understood. Milton comes readily to mind on this point, for both reasons. If we want to shift a conversational topic by ignoring the topic on the floor, we certainly can, but not without some consequences, either social (everybody moves away to talk with someone more tractable) or linguistic ("I don't understand how what you are saying relates to the topic on the floor") or, more likely, both.

What do English teachers need to know about language? Everything

that they already know, but overtly so that they can talk about their knowledge, can consider and discuss the effects of variant structures and functions, so they can demystify and sort out the complexity of our language in such a way that the study of language ceases to be a constricted, traumatic endeavor for them and their students.

On English as the "Official Language"

At its 1987 convention in San Antonio, members of the National Council of Teachers of English passed a resolution opposing the movement to establish English as the official language.

Resolution

BACKGROUND: The proposers of this resolution voiced concern about the current movement in some states to establish English as the official language. Such efforts, successful in one instance so far, can include removal of the native languages of many Americans from official documents, they noted, and called such actions potentially discriminatory.

The proposers commended the recent Public Broadcasting System TV series "The Story of English" for illustrating the capacity of English to accommodate and incorporate the linguistic characters of many people and cultures.

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of English condemn any attempts to render invisible the native languages of any Americans or to deprive English of the rich influences of the languages and cultures of any of the peoples of America;

that NCTE urge legislators, other public officials, and citizens to oppose actively action intended to mandate or declare English as an official language or to "preserve," "purify," or "enhance" the language. Any such action will not only stunt the vitality of the language, but also ensure its erosion and in effect create hostility toward English, making it more difficult to teach and learn; and

that NCTE widely publish this resolution to its affiliates and other professional organizations through news releases, letters to legislators, boards of education and other state officials, especially in those states attempting to legislate English as an official language.

What Should Language Arts Teachers Teach About Language?

Colin Harrison

Why do we teach grammar?

There is an enormous weight of received opinion, public pressure, and tradition which presses down upon teachers of language arts, and which produces apparently cogent and undoubtedly forceful arguments in favor of teaching grammar as a central focus of the language arts curriculum. The main explanation for why language arts teachers teach grammar rests on the opinion that many people hold that a study of grammar helps the students to speak and to write better English. This in turn, people feel, increases their employment prospects and life chances.

These opinions are powerfully expressed by employers, administrators, broadcasters, newspaper editors and authors, most of whom were taught grammar themselves and who believe that there is a causal relationship between their fluency in English and their having been taught grammar. Parents too, whether or not they are skilled and confident language users, tend to hold equally strongly to the view that the learning of grammar is integral to becoming an expert speaker or writer.

Later in this paper I shall argue that in many respects these beliefs, while understandable, are ill-founded. They are not, however, the only imperatives which act to keep grammar a primary focus of the language arts curriculum. Within schools, other teachers will argue that, if language arts teachers aren't teaching grammar, they are shirking a duty and acting in a professionally irresponsible manner. Modern languages teachers are often particularly scathing towards English teachers who fail to teach grammar, or who fail to teach it effectually. They bemoan the fact that they have to teach two grammars, that of English and that of the other language for which they are responsible.

Finally, there is the weight of tradition. For decades, grammar has been a key element in language arts teaching. Textbooks and workbooks which focus on grammar are in nearly every school and offer work at nearly every grade level. Tradition thus becomes institutionalised as part of a massive industry. At the same time, teachers who may doubt the efficacy of grammar books have become accustomed to using them. The tradition is also a comfort, offering teachers a subtle but possible insidious assurance:

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trust me, it whispers, for whether it is effective or not, it will keep children's activity on task. The study of grammar here serves reciprocal sets of interests—it keeps textbook sales up, and students' heads down. An admirable symbiosis.

Why we should not teach grammar

1. It doesn't work

The primary reason for not teaching grammar is the obverse of the primary reason most people believe it should be taught. For, contrary to what received opinion might suggest, it is by no means certain that being taught grammar improves a person's spoken or written language. Carefully controlled large-scale experimental studies in English-speaking countries from the USA to New Zealand have failed to show any greater improvement in language use when "grammar" versus "no grammar" classes have been compared. How is it that such research results can come to be ignored? One powerful reason is perhaps the momentum (or is it inertia?) generated by the textbook industry, but I am not wishing to argue that a conspiracy is acting to suppress the implications of the research findings. What is more probably the case is that decision makers in education have accepted the causal fallacy I referred to earlier: namely, they feel that in their own experience it has been valuable to be aware of grammatical rules and that, therefore, such knowledge should be available to all students.

What this view fails to take account of is the problem that grammar is a highly abstract (and in certain respects arbitrary) system for representing the structural relationships in a language. To have an understanding of how this system works is certainly an asset, just as having an understanding of linear algebra can be valuable to a person who needs to solve everyday problems of arithmetic, but this does not imply that it can be taught successfully to everyone. From the point of view of developmental psychology, formal grammar study requires formal reasoning, in the Piagetian sense, just as surely as a study of logic requires formal reasoning. From this perspective, it is small wonder that many students learn little from it and fail to apply what they do learn. What I wish to argue is that, for most children in school, at least before they reach eleventh grade, a study of grammar is irrelevant and potentially counterproductive. They can't understand it, even if they acquire some automated procedures which make it look as if they do. Worse than that, it has two very damaging effects: it turns children off English, and it teaches them to feel negatively about their own culture and language.

2. It turns children off English

One really sad aspect of how we teach grammar is that it transforms the view many students have of the business of writing. Children who love reading and delight in their new-found ability to write their own stories, can be heard saying, "I hate English!" The first time I heard this from my own child, I couldn't believe my ears. Chrissie was nine years old; he loved stories, he loved drama, but most of all he loved to write. He

would write sagas ten pages long, mostly highly derivative spy/detective stories, full of A-team explosions and Magnum car chases.

It turned out, of course, that by "English" he meant the statutory three sessions per week spent doing exercises from a book of grammar and comprehension exercises. I would seriously question whether he learned anything from doing those exercises, apart from an aversion to the concept of "English." As I left England in September, 1986, for a three month visit to the USA, Chris was about to begin comprehensive school. He was full of enthusiasm. "I hope there'll be lots of creative writing," he said. I said I hoped so, too, but inside I felt a stab of certainty that the exercises would be continued, probably with an increased dosage.

Before leaving this rather anecdotal section, I would add two further points. First, if my own observations and the reports of his teachers are to be trusted, Chrissie is very bright. Even if he does not enjoy them, he can at least complete the grammar exercises he is set. But if he is turned off English by these exercises, will this negative reaction not be as strong or even stronger in the case of children for whom the exercises are difficult as well as boring? Second, many colleagues have observed to me that in the UK we ask our children to write much more than is the case in the USA. A colleague here in Virginia observed to me that her son, who finished fifth grade last summer, went a whole quarter in school during which he was required to write just one paragraph of continuous prose. All of his other writing was in single sentences, phrases, or single words. Do you believe that this is possible? Could it happen in your school? If it could, then the implications are serious indeed, for if we learn to write by writing, rather than by doing grammar exercises, then this child and others like him are unlikely to learn to write, no matter how many grammar exercises they complete, and how many grammatical skills they reach criterion on. (By the way, I think I'll leave that dangling participle in!)

3. It fosters cultural elitism

Although they have some generative properties, most formal grammars are descriptive rather than prescriptive; they describe *how* our language functions and do not claim to prescribe how it *should* function. But grammar, as it is taught in our schools, is not merely descriptive, it is prescriptive. It is prescriptive in ways that are often deeply damaging to the very students it is supposed to help. What children learn from their teachers is that their grammar is bad. They learn that how they speak and write is not just different from how the teacher speaks and writes, it is "wrong." From the point of view of contemporary linguistics, this is an astounding state of affairs. By the time they have reached the age of five, practically all children have acquired a perfect command of the grammar of their language. No matter how highly motivated you are, and how long you work at it, the chances are that you will never become as fluent in a second language as just about all students are in the language with which they enter school. They will speak it with an accent and will have dialect variations, but

these are inevitable: everyone speaks with an accent and with dialect variations. We now recognise that no-one speaks Standard American English (or speaks it with "Received Pronunciation," for that matter). These notions are constructs which are useful in discussions about language, but they cannot be applied to the language performance of native speakers of the language, even if those speakers happen to come from Boston!

The fact that nearly all children begin school fluent and grammatically perfect in their native language is an achievement unparalleled by any subsequent successes attributable to the education system. An untrained task force of parents, grandparents, siblings, baby-minders, and friends achieves greater success than we as teachers will achieve in teaching reading or in teaching second languages. Granted, the brain's capacity for language acquisition is at its best in those early years, but my point is that we tend to dismiss those considerable gains, or even act as if we regard them as unfortunate. In the sixties and seventies there was a good deal of discussion about the concept of linguistic diversity, and many teachers made, and now continue to make, great efforts to be creative in their teaching, in order to celebrate the richness of that diversity. What I would suggest is that grammar teaching which begins and ends with the view that to say "ain't" is wrong, that to use a double negative is wrong, and that to write using the verb "got" is wrong, may be seriously counterproductive. No wonder students go straight out to the schoolyard and continue to use the language with which they are familiar; such language has equal or better communicative effectiveness, and it does not introduce a social distance between speakers, which is what would happen if a child actually *did* stop saying "ain't." (Think, for example, of what happened when you got to college: didn't you drop a regional accent and then find yourself busily reconstructing it when you came home on vacation, so that people wouldn't think you were putting on airs?)

What I would argue is that, instead of teaching the social conventions of our language in this divisive way as part of what we incorrectly call teaching "grammar," we should have language study as a central focus for our teaching, but approach it in ways very different from those which are rooted in a type of cultural elitism.

Why we should study language

1. Language, knowledge, and power

English teachers are very familiar with Bacon's maxim that knowledge is power. Those in favor of the teaching of grammar will strongly assert that knowledge of the language gives the user greater power to control it. I fully accept this sentiment, though I cannot accept that teaching grammar will offer many students access to this power. Indeed, to focus solely on the teaching of grammar might be to seriously limit the extent to which many students could gain power over their language.

What I would wish to argue is that systematic study of language, rather than the study of formal grammar, is what can offer all students better

opportunities to understand how language is used by them and on them. This in turn can give them more power to use language effectively and to see it as a tool over which they have control in their own lives, rather than an abstract game whose rules they do not fully comprehend. To this extent, the teaching of language is in a broad sense a political activity. Teaching formal grammar is in most respects uncontentious: grammarians may quibble about the adequacy of descriptive systems, but politicians and administrators will not feel that their territory is threatened. By contrast, consider what would happen if the object of language study becomes the relationship between language and the world: the only rationale for doing this is to empower students to change their world. The question now becomes, not "Why teach grammar?" but "Why teach children to become more skilled language users?" And the answer is, not in order to produce more English majors in college, but in order to produce adults who can use their understanding of language to do such things as to question explanations that are inadequate, to spot bias, to run a meeting confidently, to criticize advertisements thoughtfully, and to handle relationships skillfully.

2. Power over what?

Much study of formal grammar makes little use of the knowledge the student already possesses. I have already suggested that this knowledge is considerable, even in the case of a first grade child, and I would submit that it should be the starting point for the systematic study of language. If the student's own language experience is the starting point, then we circumvent the problems which arise from analyzing the properties of a purely formal system. The depth of analysis which is called for might be great, but, if the starting point is in the concrete and the known, it will not be inaccessible. Thus, instead of trying to eradicate usages such as double negatives, on the spurious logic that two negatives make a positive (does this mean that the French academicians are wrong to use both *ne* and *pas*?), we might consider investigating the ways in which native language users spontaneously demonstrate a sophisticated knowledge of the language system, for example when they shift linguistic register. This would certainly involve a systematic attention to alternative forms of utterance, but it builds upon the fact that children are already sensitive to the need to adapt their language in this way.

A "register" is a context-bound subset of a language, and even if we choose not to use this term, children will readily accept that people vary their expression according to the situation. They know that ordinarily no-one would say, "I live in a *desirable residence* in Reston." That phrase belongs to the linguistic register of the realtor. They will be equally aware of who might use the word "pad." But even if they recognised the word, they might be uncertain about when "domicile" might be used.

Children who are hardly able to write will be capable of improvising in drama the differences in smalltalk which occur when first a friend and then the local pastor arrives. Children's sense of audience is acute and

can be the focus of valuable language study. When they sit back to back and improvise a telephone conversation, then rerun the same conversation face to face, a great deal of knowledge of linguistic conventions is displayed, and a good teacher will have little difficulty getting the other students to externalize and comment on what is revealed.

Equally, instead of engaging in the hopeless task of attempting to suppress dialect variations, a teacher can simultaneously celebrate variations and give students the opportunity to make choices between alternative forms of expression. In England, which still has many fundamentally snobbish attitudes towards regional accents, there have nevertheless been some significant shifts of opinion and action in this field. The BBC now employs newsreaders and announcers with regional accents, and many parts of the country have produced books which are written in, and make a conscious attempt to preserve, regional dialects. These, and some of the many LP records which have been made of regional speech, offer a basis for constructing language arts activities which examine and lay bare dialect variations, but which do not castigate them as erroneous, irrelevant or unacceptable.

In the novels and short stories of D. H. Lawrence, the dialect of the Nottinghamshire-Derbyshire border is portrayed with great skill, and the dialect of the miners and factory workers is seen to have great vitality and directness. In 1976, within a few miles of where Lawrence was born, a book called "Ey Up Mi Duck!" was published. This celebrates, through cartoons, dialect verse, and quizzes, the regional language variations of this part of England. The book was reprinted three times within a year because it was bought, not only by local residents, but by language arts teachers, who made good use of it in their classes. Consider what valuable language study could come out of the following:

1. A list of Eighteenth Century spellings in parish and accounting records, including

   chimdey
   ingin
   markit
   owd (old)
   shot (shirt)
   watter (water).

2. A quiz on local dialect expressions, such as -

   ISITIZEN (a question of ownership)
   TINTAAHN! (a statement concerning ownership)
   ARKATTIT! (it is raining heavily)
   AIRTHIKAYPIN? (friendly greeting)
   AWICKATHOZDEE (a future appointment).

3. A dialect poem, from which this is an extract

   Wey'd gerrup Sundee mornin

An gerron aht te plee.
It wer stow pot fer yer breakfast
An bread an lard fer tea.
If yer owd man shaated yuh
Yuh dossn't stay on aht-
Yuh knew yo'd ay te dab on in
Or else yo'd gerra claat.

What is enjoyable about undertaking this type of language study is that, while it certainly encourages discussion about the appropriateness of local dialect in certain contexts, it also values the language knowledge which the children possess. It recognises their expertise and puts the teacher in the role of neutral chair of a discussion in which the students are the true experts, since they, and not the instructor, are the native users of that dialect and are able to speak with authority about its usage and connotations.

What language should we study?

I have suggested that language study should value and utilize the skills and internalized knowledge of students. But this is a starting point, not a curriculum. In this final section I wish to describe in a little more detail the type of activity which I have in mind under the broad heading of systematic language study.

1. Semiotics, pragmatics, and sociolinguistics

The function of language is to communicate. It is a sign system, and how those signs function is central to our understanding of how language works. It is for this reason that I would see semiotics as a perfectly valid part of the language arts curriculum. Traffic signs, advertisements, body language, concrete poetry, and graffiti are all instances of topics which could furnish many sessions of study round the issues of how signs transmit messages and ideologies. Try these ideas with your class, but not before you've added some of you own:

- Invent a new body language, including your own signals for "yes," "no," greeting—and kissing.
- Invent a set of signals for school; for example, "Yield for first graders!" or "Danger! Norman Fishbein plays 'Two Minutes in the Closet'!"
- Invent a secret code, and send messages in it.
- Make a survey of the colors of the cars of a group of people you know; what can you learn from this?
- Choose five nations and draw a picture of their national flag; try to find out whether the colors and design of the flag have a special meaning.
- Make a survey of clothing which people wear which has a word or special logo as part of its design. How many different ones can you identify? Why are these words and pictures on the front, and not on a hidden label?

The term "pragmatics" refers to a study of those aspects of an utterance which are not part of its surface structure, but which nevertheless affect its meaning, such as an intonation or a context that indicates an ironic inversion of the surface message. Again, children are well aware of these possibilities. As John Holt observed, teachers say "yes" when they mean "no," and the student recognises this from the rising and falling tone which really means, "You're wrong, but keep trying. . . " One way of getting into some of the educationally valuable possibilities connected with this area, and also touching on some good ideas for creative writing, is to work on the topic of hearing, overhearing, and deafness. A number of the following activities will also invite speculation about the social function of language.

- Try communicating only with sign language for fifteen minutes. Work with a friend, and try to tell a story, tell a joke, and report a sports event. What things were easy/difficult/impossible to communicate?
- Imagine you lived at the bottom of the sea. What would the world sound like?
- Start a rumor. Did it work?
- As a birthday present, your aunt, who works at CIA headquarters, has bugged the staff room at school. Write a transcript of the conversation.
- In Pumpkin County, communication is difficult, because the word "pumpkin" is the only one anyone is permitted to use (so everyone is called Pumpkin Pumpkin, and the expression for "Good morning!" is "Pumpkin pumpkin!"). Working with a friend, prepare a three-minute play in which you either (a) get arrested by a pumpkin for riding your pumpkin on the pumpkin, or (b) have an argument with your pumpkins about whether or not you should be allowed to pumpkin on Saturday night. Remember, the only word you can use in the script is "pumpkin." Good luck!

2. Analysis at the word and phrase level

I would not wish to assert, in questioning the value of teaching formal grammar, that there is no place in the language arts classroom for close attention to how language functions at the word, phrase, and sentence level. What I would suggest is that it can be approached much more purposefully, interestingly, and collaboratively than is normally done. One approach I use in the UK, teaching nine- to twelve-year-olds, is through a computer program called *Storyboard*. This is a type of total cloze or total deletion exercise, and I do it with large groups, up to twenty or more in size. To begin with, what the students see on the VDU is a series of dashes, each of which stands for just one missing letter, like this:

"——, ——!" ——— —.——.
"— ——! — — — — — - —— ——.
— ——— — — — — — — — — —— —— — —— —— ——

Usually, the text on the screen is about eighteen lines long, which gives rather more punctuation and word-length clues to the possible structure of the message than you have in the sample passage above. What the students have to do is to think of and enter words which they think are in the passage, until the whole story is reconstructed. Someone inputs complete words, one at a time, and each time the computer recognises a word which is in the passage, it updates the screen and inserts every occurrence of that word. Most English teachers do not like the look of this game at first. They see it as yet another gap-filling activity, based on a rather arbitrary guessing game, and their agnosticism is perfectly justifiable.

In fact, I would submit that there is much more depth to the activity than appears at first sight. The students are told that they are only permitted one hundred guesses in total, and this limitation encourages them to be judicious in their choices. After a few have called out suggestions, which locate the most frequently occurring words, such as *a*, *the*, and *and*, I ask the students to form into groups of two or three and to make a list of their next ten suggestions. I also tell them that I shall ask them to indicate the exact place where they think their word is going to occur. As the screen begins to fill up, I ask them to give arguments to support their choices, especially where students disagree about likely contenders for the same spot.

When children play *Storyboard* (and I have piloted it with children from eight to fifty-eight), they have to find some basis for constructing cogent arguments which relate to precise grammatical, tonal, and stylistic judgments. This they do, yet interestingly they can do so without using the formal terminology of grammar. Children will thoughtfully discuss tenses, number, pronominal reference, adverbial modifiers and synonyms, without ever using the technical terms and without being in the least inhibited by the fact that they do not know them. I even have a vivid recollection of a ten-year-old girl grabbing the arm of a boy a foot shorter than her who had typed in the word DOCTER and was about to hit the "Enter" key and yelling in his ear, "GET A DICTIONARY!"

3. Language study and literature

One of the unfortunate aspects of the way we teach English is that too often the study of language is divorced from the study of literature. Indeed, we seem to go to great lengths to ensure that the ecological validity of language and reading courses is dismally low. We set grammar exercises on sentences which no human ever spoke, and we give comprehension exercises on texts which no author ever published to be read for their own sake. There are good reasons for this: the sentences we speak break most of the rules of grammar, at least the sort of prescriptive "grammar" expounded in the English workbook; and it costs a good deal of money to use an extract from a real book in a comprehension exercise, even supposing the author would permit its use. Yet consider for a moment how much fascinating language work can come naturally from a study

of literature. Children in England love the stories of Judy Blume and Betsy Byars, but are you shocked to learn that we made a glossary of Americanisms for those who might get stumped by *calling the role* (sic), *gotten*, *cookies*, *loafers*, *sixth grade*, and *deli*? American teachers could do the same with a book written and set in the UK or in another country.

Another possibility is to ask children to write a continuation chapter for a book they enjoyed or to write a chapter which gives an account in detail of an event that the author only reported briefly. To do this well requires great attention to the prose style of the author, and it invites a much more integrated consideration of how an author writes than a grammar exercise ever could. Equally, I would argue that such activities as writing journals on behalf of the characters in a book, or preparing improvised scenes are language study activities just as surely as they are reading and literary activities.

4. Improving technical accuracy

Finally, I want to address the important issue of how we help students to learn from what they write and how we as instructors should respond to the fact that all young writers at times write awkwardly and punctuate and spell incorrectly. In the UK, many schools will teach English using coursebooks with the familiar traditional exercises. Other schools do not and produce outstandingly good writers who have never over the twelve years of formal schooling seen a grammar exercise. What do the latter schools do instead to develop technical accuracy?

1. They believe that children learn to write by writing, so there is a great deal of emphasis on drafting, discussion, collaboration, and seeking real audiences for the students' writing.
2. They believe that children learn to write by reading real books, so in addition to fostering reading through classroom libraries and individual book reports, they will read books aloud in class right up to eleventh grade (even at the expense of doing no other work in class for two weeks or more) and planning and negotiating assignments on the book with the students. They will invite in local authors, taking advantage of an Arts Council Authors in School funding program.
3. They believe that, generally speaking, it is damaging and counterproductive to "correct" the errors in a piece of creative writing. Before a piece of writing is set, a teacher will make clear whether it is to be corrected and graded for technical accuracy. If it is not, no numerical or alphabetic grade will be given; instead the teacher will respond to the piece as we would if a friend had written a story and asked us to comment on it.
4. If a later draft is to be shared with a wider audience, on display or in a newspaper or magazine, the teacher might put the students in a conference with others who would make suggestions concerning accuracy and expression. The teacher would probably, but not

necessarily, be the final person to offer comment on possible changes.

5. If a teacher notices a general weakness on some aspect of technical accuracy, he or she might have a twenty-minute blitz on it during class time.

What I would wish to emphasize is that there is nothing sentimental or sloppy about the procedures outlined above. The teachers work just as hard as they would if they were marking grammar exercises and correcting punctuation errors. The reason these teachers do not do these things is not because they have a precious view of children but rather because they believe that setting grammar exercises and wielding a red biro do nothing to improve anyone's writing. They feel that children regard grammar exercises as a chore totally unconnected with the business of real writing and that they do not learn anything from the many hours teachers devote to the careful correcting of errors in their prose. Students glance at the red ink and think, "I *know* that my 'expression was awkward,' and that my 'punctuation was careless.' That's because I'm bad at English." And then they turn to their next task. I would go so far as to say that correcting students' writing, unless it is for some purpose such as preparing it for another audience, is a monumental waste of the English teacher's professional talent. In the departments whose procedures I was outlining above, this approach is sometimes written directly as departmental policy, and the newer members of the department are encouraged to try to not feel guilty about only marking for technical accuracy once every few weeks and to spend the time thus liberated in extending their reading of children's fiction.

Do the practices I am advocating seem revolutionary and/or impossibly idealistic? Let me assure you that they have been operating in many schools for a number of years, and with excellent results. I have great respect for the sincerity and professional concern of teachers who believe that it is important to teach grammar, but I do not share their belief, for the reasons I have tried to outline above.

If this article generates further debate on this subject in the pages of the *Virginia English Bulletin*, I shall be delighted, and I look forward with interest to the possibility that this discussion might be a continuing one.

Finding Order to Language in the Elementary Classroom

Edgar H. Thompson

Most basal reading series, and the teacher's manuals that go with them, contain a plethora of activities designed to acquaint students with the intricacies of language. These activities deal with everything from the use of metaphors and similes and the etymologies of word to word puzzles and grammar study. Of course, teachers must selectively choose which activities they want to use with their students to insure that they learn important concepts about the nature of language.

This selection, however, is complicated by the very nature and use of language in classrooms. Students have to work with language in a variety of ways and for a variety of purposes. They have to practice its use before they can learn how to control language and make it do what they want it to do for them. As George Henry has put it, only

> from language that the learner himself summons up to work with can he learn to control it, not from any inherent subject matter (organized ideas) to be understood. This "working with" language constitutes the study of it; the concept "works" means reading "for," writing "about," speaking "with," listening "to." (Henry, p. 15)

Still, even though I basically agree with Henry, I think there are times when elementary students can be asked to examine explicitly certain features of language and benefit from such study. Though they are complex and difficult to specify in detail, teachers can help students learn that language does have an order to it and that human beings understand and create this order by using various cognitive processes. A study of these processes can help students learn what kind of order to look for when they are creating meaning through language. Their search for meaning will be less random and more direct as a result of this knowledge.

I want to discuss two specific cognitive processes, and, as I do, I will use a passage ("Out of the Oven" by W. Martin Young) taken from a third-grade reader in a typical basal reading series to illustrate how these processes can be dealt with directly in a classroom. Though I will describe the processes and specific instructional strategies, teachers should remember that all of these processes take place simultaneously when we speak, read, and write. Examining them separately from the larger act of making meaning is contrived, but it can be useful to children if it helps them to understand

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what kinds of structures are possible and how language is tied together. I am not, however, suggesting mere drill and practice. Becoming proficient at using these processes requires frequent and repeated practice at trying to make meaning through holistic acts of speaking, reading, and writing.

Irwin (1986) provides what I think is an excellent description of the cognitive processes that interact to create the construction of knowledge. *Microprocessing* involves making meaning at the sentence level. Two basic processes allow for the construction of knowledge at this level, chunking and microselection. *Chunking* helps students to arrange the words in sentences, whether ones they speak, ones they read, or ones they write, into meaningful syntactic units. It is not important at the primary level that children be able to identify these syntactic units in specific ways, e.g., differentiating a prepositional phase from a gerund phase using technical descriptions. Rather, children need to learn that words in a sentence are grouped in certain predictable ways. This strategy can be modeled for students orally by having them engage in choral readings, where the teacher reads a selection, pausing at predictable places in the text for emphasis, and the students follow along, pausing in the same places. In a written text, pauses can be noted by slashes in the text. For example,

> Can you tell what / these people do? (Referring to a picture in the text)
>
> Yes! / They are bakers.
> They all / work together / in this bakery.
> In this bakery / they all make bread.
> We buy just one / or two / or three loaves / of bread.
> But these people / must bake enough / for all of us.
> The bakers / must bake a large number / of loaves.

Not every sentence in a passage needs to be marked in this fashion. Also, notice that I have not always been consistent in the "rules" I used to place the slashes. It is not important that the slashes always be placed at similar junctures. What teachers are trying to accomplish is to make their children aware that language is organized into units. With practice using language, they will figure out implicitly what makes these units the same. Of course, with older students, teachers can answer questions students have about certain groupings; and, as the children grow older, teachers can begin to use some of the specialized grammatical terminology. Such terminology should not be used in a didactic way; i.e., there is only one way to technically describe this sentence from a grammatical perspective. Instead, the terms and concepts should be introduced in a way that implies that teachers are only helping students to develop a specialized language that both students and teachers can use when they talk about language.

In addition to recognizing that words in sentences are organized into syntactic units, students should learn that they do not need to remember every word in a sentence to understand the meaning. They need to learn that some words, and the ideas they represent, are more important than

others. Teachers can help students learn about this process of *microselection* by asking students to paraphrase selectively the essence of a sentence they have either just spoken or read. For example: "The boy whom many of us called Gus was caught by the men in blue who had been chasing him" can be paraphrased "Gus was caught by the police" (Irwin, p. 23). For another example, consider the sentence from "Out of the Oven:" "They all work together in this bakery." To remember the essence of this sentence, students need only remember that "They work together." In addition to asking students selectively to paraphrase sentences during class discussion, teachers can give students sample sentences from a passage they have just read and ask the students to write simple statements that summarize the essential information to be remembered.

The construction of knowledge does not exist just at the sentence level. We make meaning out of larger chunks of information. Sentences are not just randomly put together. Through the use of *integrative processing*, humans order and connect sentences in certain ways, using *anaphoric relationships*, *connectives*, and *slot-filling inferences*. Children need to have some of these processes called to their attention; otherwise, they might end up like the student in the following example. Notice how the student responds to the teacher's questions about the passage he has just read:

> It was Bob's first day of school, though it was already December. He was very excited. He didn't know which pair of shoes to wear. Getting dressed always confused him, and choosing footwear was especially puzzling. He had such big feet. He looked outside to check the weather. He wore his boots.
>
> Q: What happened in the story?
> A: Someone wore boots.
>
> Q: What day was it?
> A: Bob's first day of school in December.
>
> Q: Was someone excited?
> A: Yes.
>
> Q: Who?
> A: I'm not sure.
>
> Q: What was puzzling?
> A: Choosing footwear.
>
> Q: Why was choosing footwear a problem?
> A: I don't know.
>
> Q: What was the weather like?
> A: It didn't say. (Irwin, p. 41)

Notice how his answers to the questions are based only on information contained within the boundaries of individual sentences. He is engaging in microprocessing but not integrative processes. Students who have such problems can benefit from some direct instruction on how certain strategies lead to integrative processing.

Anaphoric Relationships. When a word or a phrase replaces another

word or phrase, anaphoric relationships are created between sentences. A frequent kind of replacement involves pronouns and their antecedents. Let me show you an example of how you might do a quick lesson on anaphoric relationships involving pronouns. Choose a passage from the reading selection for a given day and either put it on a handout or write it on the chalkboard. Then have the students do what Irwin (1986) calls a "Tying It Together" exercise. Essentially, teachers underline key words and help students to identify words in other sentences that take the place of or rename these key words. Then teachers have students draw arrows from those words they have circled that point back to the underlined words for which they stand. In the following sample passage from "Out of the Oven," all of the pronouns I have identified in brackets refer back to the antecedent *bakers*, the key word in this case:

> Can you tell what these people do? (Referring to a picture in the text) [*these*]
>
> Yes! They are *bakers*. [*they*]
> They all work together in this bakery. [*they*]
> In this bakery they all make bread. [*they*]
> We buy just one or two or three loaves of bread.
> But these people must bake enough for all of us. [*these*]
> The *bakers* must bake a large number of loaves.

If you were using this passage for a "Tying It Together" exercise with a class, *bakers* would be underlined, and all of the pronouns would be circled and have arrows that pointed to the antecedent *bakers*.

Your students may ask to whom do the pronouns *you*, *we*, and *us* refer? We, as experienced language users, know that *you* refers to the person reading the passage, the reader. Also, we know that *we* and *us* refer both to the writer of the passage, the reader, and everyone everywhere who has had similar experiences. These pronouns illustrate exophoric relationships where language users have to use their prior knowledge to determine pronoun reference (Baumann and Stevenson, pp. 10-11). Teachers should probably quickly point out these examples of exophoric relationships to students, explain the concept, and then move on to the primary focus of the lesson.

How frequently you do these activities depends on your students. If you feel that they need a lot of this kind of instruction, you might use the following sequence as a way to organize such study:

1. Personal pronouns only
2. Demonstrative pronouns only
3. Locative pronouns only [*here*, *there*, etc.]
4. A mixture of pronouns
5. Proverbs only [*so*, *does*, *can*, *will*, and *have*]
6. A mixture of pronouns and proverbs
7. Substitution with a synonym

8. Substitution with a more general word ["*this process*," "*these problems*," "*the latter*," etc.]
9. A mixture of types of substitution
10. A mixture of pronomial and substitution relations, etc.

Connectives. A similar kind of exercise to "Tying It Together" can be done for teaching connective relationships, whether they are implicit or explicit. Following are a few of the most common connective relationships:

1. C = causality: "Jack went home *because* he was sick."
2. T = time sequence: " *Before* (*after*, *when*, etc.) Jack got sick, he went to the store."
3. P = purpose: "Jack went home *in order to* get his money."
4. Cn = concession: "Jack left for home, *but* he hasn't gotten there yet."
5. Ct = contrast: "Jack was very sick. *In contrast*, I feel better!"
6. Cd = condition: " *If* Jack is sick, *then* he can't play ball." (Irwin, pp. 34-35)

After spending some time briefly discussing the connective relationships you want children to deal with on a given day, you can take a passage from the day's reading and ask students to identify the connective relationships. Naturally, they will need some help at first. You need to keep in mind, however, that you are not striving for exact precision as much as you are trying to acquaint students with the general process of looking for such connections in things they hear, in things they read, and in things they write. I have identified some of the connective relationships below in a sample passage from "Out of the Oven." Notice that I have not tried to identify every relationship but only the ones I might want to dwell on during a day's lesson.

> Bakers can also bake special breads.
> They shape the loaves in special ways
> [T] before the loaves go into the ovens.
> The bakers can make bread in the shapes
> of animals and in the shapes of alphabet
> letters.
> They work a long time to shape these
> breads.
> [CN] But they know the breads will make
> people happy.
> Even [CD] if you ask for a funny shape, some
> bakers will say, "Yes, I can make that
> for you."

Sentence combining is also an excellent way to blend reading and writing together to strengthen a study of connective relationships. For younger students, after they have been given some direct instruction about the various kinds of connective relationships, teachers can provide them with cue cards that have specific connectives written on them. Students can then be asked to examine a sample passage and combine sentences in new ways using the connectives listed on the cards. For example, in the above passage,

a young student might take the connective "and" and join the first two sentences together. Teachers can ask older students to create new ties between sentences by using connective relationships different from the ones actually used in a passage. For example, a fourth or fifth grade student might recognize that the sentence from the sample passage, "They work a long time to shape these breads. [CN] But they know the breads will make people happy," can be tied together by a casual relationship if the word "because" is substituted for "but." Also, as students become more sophisticated in their understanding of how language is ordered, they can be asked to combine sentences in ways that will make the meaning sharper and more concise than the way it initially was written. For example, the first two sentences from the sample passage, can be combined as follows: *Bakers can bake special loaves shaped in special ways.*

Slot-filling Inferences. A great deal of information necessary for the creation of meaning requires that students make connections between (1) what is literally said orally or actually written down and (2) their prior knowledge. Students must make inferences to fill in the missing "slots." This information can usually be supplied by answering one or more of the following questions:

1. Agent = Who did it?
2. Object = To whom or what was it done?
3. Instrument = What was used to do it?
4. Experiencer = Who experienced the feeling or thought?
5. Source = Where did it (or they) come from?
6. Goal = What was the result or goal? (Irwin, p. 38)

Often, these inferences are so easy for us, as teachers, to identify that we fail to recognize that our students may have trouble making such inferences. For example, in the statement, "To water the animals, he had to break the ice," it is easy for teachers to infer that some instrument was used, perhaps a snow shovel, to break the ice. Students, however, may not make these connections initially unless they are given some assistance. To get some practice analyzing sentences for slot-filling inferences, consider the following sentences from "Out of the Oven":

> The bakers who come to work first cannot work all day and all night. Other bakers come into take over the work.

Though it may seem obvious to us, it is not stated explicitly in the passage that those bakers who were there first *leave and go home after work*. Students need to have some concept of shift work to fully understand what is said here.

> The bakers clean the ovens. They clean all the things they use.

Other than the ovens, nothing else to be cleaned is explicitly specified in the passage. Students must already know what kinds of utensils and equipment are used in a bakery before they can understand what has to

be cleaned. Also, what does "cleaned" mean here? How will the various articles that need to be cleaned, in fact, get cleaned? What kinds of products and tools are used during the cleaning process? To answer these questions, the students must rely on their prior knowledge to fill in the "missing slots." If such prior knowledge does not exist, however, it is up to teachers to provide it.

Acquainting students with the concept of slot-filling inferences can perhaps best be done through questioning during and after reading. During writing, students can discuss the concept of slot-filling inferences as they share their writing with their peers and their teachers. As a result, students learn how much information they are requiring their readers to infer. However, probably the most significant way that students learn about slot-filling inferences is through the thinking process modeled by teachers. As teachers ask questions about what a writer is implying, students learn how they can clarify their own points that are unclear to them.

Once students have begun to grasp the concept that order does exist in language, teachers can extend this awareness by introducing students to the larger, macro-structures that exist in discourse e.g., story grammars and typical expository text patterns. (See Irwin or Gillet and Tempie for a complete discussion of these topics.) Also, with older students, probably fourth grade and up, students can take their new understanding about the ways in which language is ordered and structured and apply this knowledge. For example, your students might as a class develop their own grammar of the English language (Postman and Weingartner). After general discussions, a class might be broken up into groups to work on specific parts of this grammar. Though this activity is a bit contrived, it does allow students to apply what they have learned about the nature of language. As a result, it deepens their understanding of how our language is put together. Further, if they are asked to compare their grammar with that contained in their textbooks, they will be in a position to analyze it critically, recognizing that which is important and that which can be discarded.

Whatever forays you and your students make into these processes, your explorations should be done within the larger context of making meaning, whether the meaning results from speaking, reading, or writing. None of the activities I have described should degenerate into a lesson devoted only to "drilling the skill." They should be inserted into lessons wherever they can help students make sense out of a larger piece of discourse.

In conclusion, I do *not* think that it is important for elementary students to understand in great detail all of the so-called in's and out's or grammatical subtleties of language. I do think, however, that it is critical that they learn that language does have an order that is logical, not random. If they learn this concept, students will have a greater appreciation for the beauty and complexity of their language. Further, they will be open to and prepared to deal with the more sophisticated language study they will face in the upper grades.

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Grammar: How and When

John H. Bushman

Over the past many years, educators have been cussing and discussing the grammar question. Reports of research (Bushman, 1984; Hillocks, 1986) clearly make the point that teaching grammar is not an effective means for learning how to speak and to write. Quite the contrary, research studies quite clearly indicate that there is no correlation between the ability to write and speak and the knowledge of formal English grammar. Some educators will go on to suggest that, if anything, there may be a negative effect since the time spent on grammar is time not spent on writing.

But publishing companies continue to crank out grammar texts and teachers continue to use these texts day after day after day. The popularity of *Warriner's Handbook*, along with a few others, is at an all time high. There is a resurgence of memorizing lists of various parts of speech. Students learn the 54 (or is it 53, 55?) prepositions; they memorize the 8, 9, or 10 parts of speech; they conjugate the verbs; and they diagram. Yes, while many of us who have been trying to remove grammar teaching from the classroom thought we had succeeded at least in eliminating the useless task of tearing apart someone else's sentences, we haven't. Students are diagramming more than ever! AND, STUDENTS STILL CAN'T WRITE. According to the 1986 report of the National Assessment of Writing: "Most students, majority and minority alike, are unable to write adequately except in response to the simplest of tasks" (Applebee, *et al.*, p. 9).

As I pause to reflect on this matter, the question arises over and over again: Why? Why does grammar teaching, as we now know it, continue? Even if teachers, administrators, and parents read none of the research concerning the lack of effect of grammar teaching on the ability of students to write, the results that come from their experience itself ought to stop grammar teaching in elementary and junior high/middle schools in its tracks. Add to this the reports of writing assessments in the schools (Applebee, 1981; Applebee, 1986), and it should seem to all concerned in education that what we are now doing in our classrooms is not working.

The major reason why grammar does not take is that students do not *need* to be taught grammar in order to use it. They have achieved competency. Their performance level may need adjusting, but they have competence with the English language. Just as they do not need to know the names of the parts of a bicycle in order to ride it or to know the names of the parts of an automobile engine in order to start it, they need not know

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the parts of their language in order to use it. Ask five-year-olds what they know about the grammar of English, and they will use the grammar of the English language to the fullest as they tell you they do not know what you are talking about. Children from the beginning have communicated their wishes and needs and have had their requests met. Some research will show that this process starts in the womb. It then takes the form of crying, then sounds, then words or partial words, then word combinations, and then a series of words much like the English sentence. Children practice and practice and receive much praise. Finally, just before entering school at age five, they have attained about 95% of their eventual competency to use the English language. We now send them to school where teachers give them a yearly dose—many times for as many as 10 or 11 years—of something they do not need and do not want; and something that will not help and that may interfere with normal writing growth.

Can you imagine other professionals acting as we do? Let me suggest one scenario: Doctors continue to recommend a particular treatment knowing that the research on the effectiveness of this particular treatment as reported in the medical journals indicates that it will not work. The doctors continue to prescribe this treatment for 10 or 11 years with no success. Can you imagine the furor that would take place? How about the malpractice suits?

What Should We Do Instead?

But assume that, at last, we put aside the teaching of grammar for the improvement of writing. If we do not spend time on grammar teaching in grades K-12, what will the curriculum be? Let me spend the rest of this article with a more positive approach as I emphasize the writing/language component at the elementary, junior high/middle, and senior high school curriculum.

Imagine with me what a classroom might be like if we were to stop teaching grammar day after day. It would seem to me that students would generate a new attitude toward the English class. The dull, boring, non-creative grammar drills and memorizations are gone; so students find themselves involved in new creative writing experiences. These students are writing frequently; therefore, they establish fluency early in their educational experiences. They begin to get a sense of what is appropriate in language choices as well as stylistic options from their peers and the teacher rather than from a false right/wrong approach found in the grammar book. They begin to develop confidence; and as they do, they realize that they are the decision makers concerning their writing. Students develop pride as they take on more and more ownership of what they create. The basis for all of this is what they bring to the classroom: their language. The classroom teacher takes students where they are in language development—oral, at first—and builds from there. The writing, as it begins, is much like the early stages of speech—a piece here, a part there. After much practice and a great deal of teacher enthusiasm for what students

have composed and a tremendous amount of teacher praise, students begin to grow in their writing ability. Over a period of many years, students are involved with content and process that are consistent with their cognitive development. As a result, teachers are able to offer a variety of writing activities to young students which will provide a solid foundation for more structured, sophisticated writing that follows in later years. While everyone may be involved in the same general activity, the responses can be so varied that students with a wide range of differences can have success. This does not seem to be true when everyone has to underline the subject once and the verb twice.

In this writing/language component, the students in the early years spend much time on collecting and creating effective uses of language. They work with bumper stickers, book titles, license plates, word puzzles, and a variety of other language activities to make their language fresh and alive and, at the same time, to help them see that working with language is a fun and exciting activity. Students ask questions about the effective language they create or find. Why is this construction or language structure effective? Why is that word used effectively in that situation? Language items are talked about in terms of writing that has been found or created. Language is rarely discussed in isolation.

As the student matures, so does the writing and the understanding of the grammar (structure) of the language. The important thing to happen in the English classroom is the continual *use* of language not the grammatical analysis of it. Students need practice in all aspects of language: reading, writing, listening and speaking. As this practice occurs, syntactic maturity develops. Jean Sanborn (1986) states the position well: "Language continues to develop through the *use* of language not through exercises in the naming of parts" (p. 74). As young people in grades 5-10 continue to write, and to read, and to talk, the classroom is an exciting place to discuss language. To explore how a writer composed a particular segment of writing, to investigate the variety of sentence beginnings, and to note how meaning can come about as a result of a particular sequence of words involves students in a study of grammar that truly helps young people discover the workings of their own language. To do this in an informal, almost incidental, way builds on what students already know. It allows students to increase their perceptions of their language a little at a time.

In addition, other language areas, while not traditionally thought of as "grammar," are included in this classroom study. Students learn that the language spoken/written in Atlanta, Georgia, is not quite the same as that spoken/written in Franklin, New Hampshire. They learn that the language of their favorite rock star is a bit different from the language used by their parent's favorite newspaper columnist. Students also spend time discovering how their language evolved to what it is in 1987 from what it was many years ago. They also realize that the English language spoken by Crocodile Dundee, James Bond, Dirty Harry, and Paul Schaffer all had the same beginnings. Students also investigate the power of this English

grammar that they speak and write as they discover its manipulative use in advertising, government, and education. The study of the dictionary and the philosophy from which it evolved is not omitted either. The classroom takes on a new look. It views language as having many areas to study—all of them important in the lives of young people.

I believe this language emphasis should continue as young people enter grades 11 and 12. It is at this time, however, that their language study may become a bit more serious. There seem to be two reasons why the study of English grammar (i.e. a description of how language works) may be appropriate for high school juniors and seniors:

1) it is worth knowing for its own sake and
2) it may help with writing performance.

I support the first overwhelmingly; of the second, I am not sure. Frankly, since there is no research to support the value of grammar in relation to writing, I doubt that there is any better reason for teaching it in higher grades than in the earlier grades.

I must deviate a bit from developing in more detail these two conditions under which we might make a case for teaching formal grammar in order to explain why I believe we should wait until the upper high school years to offer this subject matter. Most high school students are more mature than their junior high/middle school counterparts and may have moved from the concrete operational level to the formal operations level or, at least, may be in the transition mode. If they are, they may have a better chance of understanding the abstract qualities found in the grammar of English. These students, in a general sense, have reached intellectual maturity and are able to think in a systematic way, to reason by implication at the abstract level, and to bring together variables through synthesis. It would seem to me that the grammar of English has an overabundance of these abstract qualities. It is, indeed, these qualities that make its understanding quite difficult for many students.

I believe it would be appropriate to offer students in high school a course of study in the structure of English. We offer this description of how English works because we are speakers of the language. We do this based on the same premise that we teach American history or U. S. Government. We do it because we are Americans. We should know how the system under which we live works. Similarly, we learn the structure of English because we speak and write it.

How does English work? The following are but a few of the many topics that students can investigate through their own writing and through the literature that they read. I share a very brief description of what might be done; the creative teacher can add much to each activity.

1. Discuss the patterns of English sentences. When we speak and write, what patterns do we frequently use? How are they similar? different? The patterns are suggested by the following sentences:

Eric is a boy	Eric talks
Eric is short	Eric stops the car
Eric is there	Eric gave Ellen a kiss
Eric seems short	The town selected Jim mayor
Eric became a hero	The kiss made Ellen happy

This activity can very easily be handled inductively, creating a sense of power within students since they pull these patterns out of their own language base.

2. Have students investigate the ways we make questions in English. What words do we use? How do the patterns change? What word movement takes place? Discuss the "wh" questions. What process takes place? Discuss other ways of asking questions: tone of voice, tag questions, etc.

3. Discuss the use of the negative in English. What happens when we make an utterance negative. How do the patterns change? Discuss the use of the emphatic and imperative forms.

4. As students write and speak, they frequently put ideas together. They do this automatically as they use English. Through the process of sentence combining, we take separate ideas and put them together in a variety of ways to make one compound idea. We insert (embed), add, and delete. Have students create their own sentences in which these processes occur. Have them look at literature to see how this process occurs there. What would happen if the process did not occur?

5. Discuss with students how we often rearrange what we say. We use the passive voice, we begin sentences with the expletive "there," we place phrases in the front of the kernel sentence or sometimes at the end, and we use words to stand for parts of sentences. A few examples follow:

Eric broke the window.
The window was broken by Eric.

Three students are in the library.
There are three students in the library.

Only in this way could he win.
He could win only in this way.

They can not do this.
This they can not do.

There are, of course, other areas to explore. Certainly the use of pronouns in their many forms should be included as well as other ways to substitute one idea for another. The English verb is interesting as well. For example, to have students investigate the origins of the "to be" verb and all its forms gets them involved in some linguistic history.

In all of this study the emphasis should be on the description of what English is, not a prescription of what it should be. Too, whenever possible, the student's creative efforts should be used to generate the particular forms under discussion. In addition, students can make many comparisons to other languages that they may be learning. To learn the structure of English and how it compares to other languages certainly will give students much more linguistic knowledge and power.

The second reason for offering grammar is less defendable simply because

the research does not support it. However, it would seem to follow that, if students have developed fluency and confidence in their writing, and if they have, indeed, moved closer to the formal operational level so that they can have a better understanding of these grammatical concepts, there may be a chance that the students in high schools could make some application to the writing process. It makes sense, too, that this is the time in their education that these students are more serious about revising their writing and, as a result they may be ready to accept additional information that may influence their linguistic choices.

In summary, the writing/language emphasis rather than the grammar emphasis gives students the credit for what they already know. The five-year-olds who enter school in the kindergarten program bring with them a tremendous language capability. For the next 12 years, teachers should continue to build on this language competency. It is through writing and speaking their own language and reading and listening to the language of others that students will achieve the syntactic maturity (performance) that we educators desire for them. As they grow in this exciting human activity, they will begin to desire it for themselves.

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Standard English, World English, and Students' Right to Their Own Language

Frank C. Cronin

The PBS television series, "The Story of English," and the book that accompanies it are the happy result of extensive research, some of it entirely new (Robert McCrum, William Cran, and Robert MacNeil, New York: Viking, 1986). Both focus on dynamic, evolving English around the world today as well as the history of Anglo-American English. This global view of English in all its richness and variety provides a larger context for resolving the protracted debate about American students' right to their own dialects and cultural identity (vs. Standard English)—an unsettled controversy which has been reflected in NCTE journals since the Sixties.

In "The Story of English," we see that countless millions of Africans and Asians are not expressing less respect for their own unique cultural heritages as they rush to master Standard English in school—or even via TV where school is not available. They know that Standard English is the language of the "global village." English is now the primary language of international communication, the international language of business, finance, science, technology, and culture. About 350 million people use English as their mother tongue; they constitute a tenth of the world's population and are scattered across every continent (p. 20). Three quarters of the world's mail, telexes, and cables are in English. More than half of the world's scientific and technical periodicals are in English, and eighty percent of the information stored in the world's computers is also in English (p. 20).

Even within countries like India and Nigeria, where English was the language imposed by the British Empire, independence did not result in the abandonment of English, as many ardent patriots desired and expected. In fact, far from withering away, English has flourished in the former colonies—for very practical, sensible reasons. For example, Nehru was determined to rid India of the language of her conquerors; but, in spite of his efforts, English has conquered India today far more completely than in the days of the Raj (p. 39). In India, with two hundred languages, English turned out to be necessary to unify the country. Thus, in New Delhi a

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woman student observes that ninety-five percent of Indian men "do definitely consider English as a prerequisite for brides" (p. 40). English has also become the national language of Nigeria. If one of the three great tribal languages became the national language, speakers of the other two major dialects and the one hundred fifty minor dialects would feel left out. Even more important, through English, both Nigeria and India have become more fully integrated into a world culture. English is also the *lingua franca* of all Africa. African literature, written in Standard English, can be shared by the entire continent and by the world.

Because Standard English is the dialect of the global village, the governor of Hong Kong is determined that Standard English be taught in the schools, not the pigin English of the streets. In Kuwait, the national university center "teaches predominantly English." Japanese companies use English, even for internal memos. European companies use English so that Italian, German, French, and other workers, managers, and financiers can communicate with each other, verbally and in writing. English is the alternate language they all have in common. Consequently almost half of all the business deals concluded in Europe are in English.

American children are, therefore, fortunate in being able to grow up speaking and learning English. Is it not reasonable that, whatever their ethnic origins, they should master its standard, international form or dialect in school, if only for practical economic reasons?

Practical financial reasons are making Standard English the language of business, industry, finance, science, and technology throughout the Asian basin as that part of the world enters an astonishing period of economic growth and prosperity. Businessmen and workers from diverse Asian cultures who are engaged in common projects communicate with each other in English. Even natives of Holland working in former Dutch colonies in Asia use English when they are engaged in international projects. Dutch has all but disappeared in the former colonies. Also, the Japanese find English more suitable to scientific and technical communication than their native language with its archaic writing. And on mainland China, so jealous of foreign intervention, the number people who are now eagerly learning English via television exceeds the entire population of the United States.

In 1972, a "sparsely attended business meeting" of the Conference on College Composition and Communication voted to adopt a resolution designated "Students' Right to Their Own Language" (Harold B. Allen, "Language" in Marjorie N. Farmer, ed., *Consensus and Dissent: Teaching English Past, Present, and Future* NCTE Yearbook, 1986, p. 22). In 1974, the resolution, "broader in scope than simply the Black English situation," was published with an "explanatory policy statement" that emphasized the wrongness of making one dialect unacceptable and allowing "one social group to exert its dominance over another" (Allen, p. 22). As I have been suggesting throughout this article, the practical justification for learning Standard English in school is economic, one of personal success and advancement. An American who is locked in a cultural enclave, unable

to speak and write the dialect of business and industry, remains handicapped for life. In other words, Americans do not go to school to be confirmed in their ethnic identity. Through public education, young people from foreign or minority enclaves have traditionally learned to fit into the mainstream of American life and to succeed economically and personally. That practical advantage is precisely why countless millions of people around the world are rushing to master Standard English, while retaining their loyalty and affection for their own cultural inheritances. Furthermore, as the PBS series demonstrates, those diverse cultures will ultimately influence and enrich the English of the global village.

The policy statement's charge of immoral oppression by one social group of another is serious indeed. However, the sixty or more language groups who live around San Francisco will only be able to merge into one American people through the Standard English that is equally the property of all Americans. Furthermore, there are many ways to preserve one's cultural heritage. Through the course of centuries, English was forcefully imposed upon the Irish (McCrum, pp. 163-193). From being the language of the Anglo-Irish establishment, English gradually became the language of all Ireland. And what a blessing this conquest has been for the Irish! Over the centuries, they have enriched English with their own native culture and imagination, and this rich development has continued as the Irish emigrated in large numbers to the New World.

Today, Irish literature in English is studied around the world, and Irish immigrants have enjoyed a much easier access to mainstream American business and culture than immigrants who arrived on these shores immersed in foreign languages and foreign cultures. Less fortunate were the immigrants from eastern Europe, Italy, and elsewhere. Through the hard work of generations of dedicated English teachers, each new wave of immigrants quickly learned English in order to enter the mainstream of American life and achieve success.

Like the Irish, Asians and Africans today are enriching Standard English with their own unique cultural contributions. Ralph Waldo Emerson was indeed prophetic when he observed that "The English language is the sea which receives tributaries from every region under heaven." As the PBS series demonstrated repeatedly, even in the old colonial days, cultures around the world were continually enriching English. Similarly, African cultures have contributed to American English, and black culture in America continues to make its contribution.

On the plantations of the Old South, black and white children grew up together speaking Plantation creole. Black nurses cared for and taught both black and white infants and children. The magnificent Dilsey of *The Sound and the Fury* represents many generations of black mothers caring for and loving children of both races. While touring America, Charles Dickens noticed that the speech of white Southern women was profoundly influenced by black creole (p. 216). As "The Story of English" states, "Before the 1960's, there was a profound reluctance on the part of whites to admit

any slave contribution to the making of American English" (p. 209.). Only now, in the 1980's do most American linguists accept that there is a continuum in the varieties of Black English which runs from the Krio of Sierra Leone to Caribbean creole to Gullah (off the coast of Virginia and the Carolinas) to the modern Black English of the United States (p. 209). Black English, with its roots deep in Africa, entered the mainstream of American English through such varied means as jazz and the migration of blacks to Northern cities, especially in the Twentieth Century. Thus, black culture and speech have profoundly influenced Standard English.

But Standard English remains the language of business and industry in the United States and, increasingly, around the world. Efforts to use public education to preserve enclaves of Appalachian, Black, or Hispanic culture and language are as quixotic as the Irish efforts to restore and preserve Gaelic. Those locked in the subculture or enclave are severely handicapped in their efforts to move into the mainstream of American culture and the international English speaking community. My Irish cousins resented having to study Gaelic in school and pass state Gaelic examinations; they would have much preferred to study European languages. They vacation in Europe, and Ireland's entry into the common market has brought European business to Ireland. For my cousins and countless generations of their ancestors, the language of the English "invaders" has been an immense blessing. Irish culture has survived and flourished in English and has profoundly influenced English, as has Scottish, Welsh, and other cultures.

Since we are in an era of ethnic awareness, Hispanic and black cultural identity may be preserved more richly than the cultures of the European immigrants of prior centuries. Learning the Standard English of world business and industry in school does not imply any offense to one's ethnic culture. Indians, Nigerians, and the citizens of Singapore speak a native English at home but learn BBC English in school for practical economic reasons. And the creative interaction between the different Englishes will continue to enrich the common global dialect. Such creative interaction has constituted the history of English—as "The Story of English" explains in such fascinating detail.

In 1606, the year in which Shakespeare wrote *Anthony and Cleopatra*, a second group of Virginia-bound settlers left London and Plymouth for what was to become the first permanent English settlement in the new world, Jamestown, named after the new king from Scotland. Shakespearian English took root in the new world in what is today Virginia. Even today, echoes of the English of Shakespeare's day, especially the accents of Devon and Cornwall, can be heard in the speech of the Virginians of Tangiers Island in the Chesapeake Bay (p. 106). Those first English speaking Americans of Jamestown could scarcely have imagined that their language was destined to become the *lingua franca* of the world and that the success of their settlement was a small but significant step in that larger success. All the dialects of English are to be respected because they have enriched

Standard English, and they will continue to be tributaries flowing into the common stream of the Standard English of the world for many centuries to come.

How Sentence Combining Can Help Students Mature as Writers

Over the past fifteen years, the technique known as sentence combining has emerged as an effective method of teaching students to tighten and vary their written sentences. *Creative Approaches to Sentence Combining*, the latest in the Theory and Research Into Practice series, summarizes the welter of recent research on this much-publicized teaching activity and explains how and why it works.

The booklet is published by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills and the National Council of Teachers of English. Author William Strong of Utah State University, a teacher educator with ample experience in elementary and high school English language arts, is codirector of the Utah Writing Project.

Strong highlights the teacher attitudes about writing required for effective use of sentence combining. It works, he says, for teachers who believe that students learn to apply conventions of syntax and sentence structure not so much from memorizing rules as from practice in applying them. It works for teachers who believe that competence in oral language helps students acquire the writer's knack of developing sentences in one's head. It works for teachers willing to act on the idea that "playful attention to written language" through collaborative activities can reduce writing anxiety. Finally, it works for the teacher who recognizes both the need to connect each classroom activity to a broad educational goal and the need to explain that goal to students, so that they know sentence combining is not just busywork.

Strong advocates a broad definition of sentence combining. He goes beyond merely presenting a series of kernel sentences with cues about how to combine them into complex statements. "Open" sentence combining, Strong says, is actually "sentence revising or sentence relating" and is best used in group activities for short periods in conjunction with writing assignments. It pertains, he says, mainly to revision, somewhat to invention or drafting, and it assumes mistakes are inevitable and desirable parts of learning.

Srong's ideas for classroom practice call on teachears to model editing and decision-making skills for students, to spark discussion by having students give reasons for their stylistic decisions, and to make it clear that in writing there is no one-and-only right way to express an idea. The author draws on the ideas of a number of other talented teachers. He shows how sentence combining applies to the learning of course content as well as to writing itself.

Strong goes on to answer "twenty questions" about the uses and techniques of teaching through sentence combining, from how to deal with "wrong answers" to how to focus practice sessions on style, thinking and cohesion, and other higher-level writing skills. The book includes many sample worksheets. Classroom activities are keyed to appropriate teaching levels. An extensive bibliography steers readers to further literature on the subject.

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*(**Creative Approaches to Sentence Combining** by William Strong. 85 pages, paperbound. Price: $7.00; NCTE members, $5.25. Available from NCTE, Urbana, Illinois. Stock No. 08830-015.)*

Dialects: Resolving the "My English-This English" Conflict

John Baker

When I began my first year of teaching in Monroe County, West Virginia, I soon learned that I could not depend on getting much work done in my room before school began at 8:30. Allen, one of my first period English 8 students, and a group of his friends were on the first bus to arrive at school; and early on that fall they decided that my room would be their early morning hangout. Sitting at my desk and attempting last minute preparations for the day, I would find myself surrounded by four or five boys who never seemed to have anything to do but watch me and listen to Allen. Allen talked from the moment he entered the door; and, as he made his way up to my desk, his buddies followed, ready to listen to what became Allen's daily account of the previous evening's activities at his home. I always tried to go ahead with lesson plans and grading; but, more often than not, I would find myself just as engrossed in this boy's stories as were his grinning friends. We heard in abundant detail about everything from Saturday night's coon hunt to Pawpaw's bout with the shingles. I especially remember one morning's account of a wild dog that had attacked the family's sheep. In his narrative Allen combined the hilarious description of his father, with gun in hand, running out of the house in his underwear and falling down the icy front steps, with a pathetic picture of the ewes the dog had left mangled and bleeding. Then completing the descriptions, he added, "When Dad finally fired the gun, that hound he took up the ridge behind our house and boy, did he ever part those pines!"

Although I usually got little accomplished, I have to admit that I enjoyed those before-school sessions; and I never ceased to be amazed at all that transpired in Allen's life and his ability to share so vividly the experiences with his "audience." But when first period began, Allen retreated to his desk and during most classes remained silent and withdrawn. Although he was willing to attempt any assignment or activity, he just did enough to get by; in other words, in class he bore little resemblance to the enthusiastic boy I saw between 8:00 and 8:30. His lack of interest in class bothered me, but I felt that the best way to help him was just to drill and test and preach more about the importance of correct use of the English language.

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I could only hope that Allen would wake up and see the need to learn what we were studying in class—a class that unfortunately included very little attention to my students' own language and their attitudes toward other language varieties.

One day after receiving a low grade on a "preferred usage" test, Allen came up to me and said, "Mr. Baker, I just can't get this English." As I think back on this statement, I see it as a significant commentary on both the real needs of my students in that rural Southern Appalachian school and on some of my own failings as an English teacher. Allen, perhaps more than any student I ever taught, had in his short life in Monroe County "gotten" English. He had acquired and successfully learned to use the dialect—the vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar—of his speech community. It was, however, *this* English—the standard or prestige English that I was so conscientiously emphasizing that year, the English in his textbooks, the English that I, his teacher, was so careful to use correctly—that Allen said he could not "get" and that he apparently saw as something so removed from the concerns, events, and needs in his own life.

My experience with Allen has become for me a springboard for considering, first, what general knowledge of and attitudes toward dialect study teachers, especially those just beginning their careers, should possess and, second, why teachers in Appalachia should especially emphasize dialectology in the language arts curriculum. The focus of this article is on those theories and practices through which teachers can help students see language study as not merely having to learn the correct English that their teachers say they should be using but rather learning more about their language as a wonderful, exciting, and complex invention that involves so much more than just right and wrong.

What English Teachers Should Know About Dialects

Definitions:

The students who enter a middle or high school English teacher's classroom bring with them a basic grammar learned from their parents. Added to this grammar is the language learned from interaction with members of their local neighborhoods and communities. In early adolescence these students will have become aware that English is spoken in different ways and that some ways are viewed as "better" than others (Malmstrom and Lee, p. 100). In a typical classroom, each of the students also has his or her own peculiar speech pattern called an idiolect; and, because the majority of these students will likely be a part of the same speech community, their similar idiolects will form the dominant dialect in the class. This dialect or variety of English contains special features of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar that can be related in various ways to the social and regional backgrounds of that community.

There are two general types of dialects: regional and social. Northern, Midland, and Southern have been designated as the three major American regional dialect areas, but within each of these regions are pockets or islands

containing distinct dialectal differences from the surrounding areas (Hook, p. 284). The settlement history of an area often reveals that its limited association with other areas resulted in the early establishment of these language pockets, many of which continue to exist today (Dettaven, pp. 82, 86).

The second type of dialect is based on social groups that have developed dialects also identifiable in terms of vocabulary, syntactic structure, and pronunciation. Such dialects, including Appalachian, Black, Cajun, and Hawaiian English, are to some people considered socially unacceptable or, to use the linguist's term, "non-standard," because of their deviation from the "standard" variety of English used in schools, in the media, and in language schools for foreigners (Hawkins, p. 173).

Appropriate Attitudes:

The authors of the NCTE 1986 *Guidelines for the Preparation of Teachers of English Language Arts* list as one of the necessary attitudes of English teachers the "respect for the individual language and dialect of each student" (p. 14). This statement echoes other recent commentary from professional organizations and court decisions dealing with students who speak non-standard dialects. For example, in 1974 the NCTE's Conference on College Composition and Communications made the following resolution:

> We affirm strongly that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language. (as quoted in Hook, p. 289)

And in 1979 U. S. District Judge Charles Joiner's landmark decision required the Ann Arbor, Michigan, school district to develop a plan which would support teachers in effectively teaching non-standard speaking students.

Such support of the individual student's language comes in reaction to the intolerance many teachers have displayed for non-standard dialects, as well as the lack of understanding that exists about the relationship between standard language and other varieties of English. Responding to these problems in a 1984 issue of the *English Quarterly*, Herb Smith states that English teachers' "long-range goal must...be a deeper universal understanding about the nature of language." They must, Smith writes, be aware of "the abyss separating the cultural ideal of 'proper grammar' and the reality of an infinity of standards" (pp. 104-105).

To achieve this understanding, it is, first of all, necessary that teachers take the attitude that everyone speaks a dialect and that all dialects or varieties are interesting and acceptable. Furthermore, teachers need to acknowledge the importance of students becoming aware of the reasons for the existence of regional and social dialects (Hook, p. 287). Third, teachers need to be enthusiastic about the varieties of our language and help students recognize the power language can have in their lives (Malmstrom and Lee, p. 132). Finally, teachers must be aware of what J. N. Hook calls the "dilemma" of English teachers: knowing that there is nothing inherently inferior in non-standard dialects but realistically

acknowledging "that influential segments of society value standard speech and have their own ways of rewarding people who use it and ways of penalizing those who don't" (p. 287).

Coming to Grips with the Concept of Standard and Non-standard Dialects

The terms *standard* and *non-standard* can be misleading. *Standard* does not mean correct or superior; *non-standard* is not wrong or inferior. *Non-standard* simply means that a dialect is different from the features of standard or mainstream language forms. Moreover, a single standard English dialect does not exist. In the United States there are many standard regional dialects, such as those found in Boston, Denver, and New Orleans. Socially stigmatized dialects, including Appalachian, are labeled "non-standard" because they exist outside the mainstream of standard dialect. These dialects are not deficient (Gentry, p. 111) but, from a linguistic perspective, are each socially acceptable because they follow the linguistic rules of the dialect in question (Wangberg, p. 305).

The important point to stress about the dialects of a language is that they have more similarities than differences. Regional dialectal accent seldom creates problems of understanding for speakers of English; but, because they differ enough from standard English, social dialects do. These dialects can cause difficulties in communication and in social and personal relationships. Walter Loban states that "To deal with such problems in schools requires sound knowledge, humane values, and great delicacy, for nothing less than human dignity and the pupil's self image are at stake" (p. 19).

How, then, should teachers help students view the standard versus non-standard dialect issue? The consensus in the literature on dialects is that students must be given the opportunity to perfect or acquire standard English but that no student should ever feel that there is an effort to replace his or her own dialect with a more favorable standard form. It is important for teachers to realize that "There is a line, though sometimes subtle, between imposing the standard language and giving access to it" (Daniell, p. 503). Basically, students should see learning standard English as a way of building up and supplementing their language (Loban, p. 21). As part of this learning experience, they can develop a positive attitude toward the standard form as an important communication tool that they have the opportunity to learn in school.

At the secondary level, students should also become aware of the choices they will have to make in using their language. Social context, audience, and the degree of formality of situations affect those choices. Students need to realize that adjusting their speech for effective communication will often be necessary and that ability to rely throughout their lives on a knowledge of what is considered standard English will be beneficial (Gentry, 1982, p. 112).

A Look at One Non-mainstream Variety of English: Some Special Considerations for English Teachers in Appalachia

The one consoling thought I have about my student Allen is that, during our informal, out-of-class interaction, I did not give in to frequent temptations to "correct" his speech. During those times Allen apparently did not feel threatened, and he obviously enjoyed using his language. It is possible, however, that, because of my emphasis on correctness and, more so, because of the lack of attention I gave to actual language study, he likely felt that his kind of "talk" had little to do with what we were doing in the classroom. He found few, if any, opportunities to relate his own language to his English class—a sad situation indeed. What I needed to provide for Allen and all of my students was what Elaine Wanberg in "Nonstandard Speaking Students: What Should We Do?" describes as "an environment for language growth" (p. 307). In this environment the teacher needs to look at the students' own respected dialect as the appropriate foundation for language study.

Laying the Foundation

In an article entitled "Humanizing the Language Arts in Appalachian Schools," Thomas Cloer discusses the rich cultural heritage of Appalachia "that has never been utilized fully in a humanized language arts program which values and uses [students'] personal experiences . . . as launching pads of language arts activities" (p. 235). An important aspect of these experiences, Cloer explains, is the Appalachian student's "home-rooted language." In the classroom this language must not be criticized nor should there be an attempt to replace it with another form. In contrast to these approaches, the teacher needs to view these students' dialect as their "inheritance" that can be "expanded and enriched" through effective language instruction (p. 237). Cloer stresses that no matter what the cultural group or the language used, the foundation of language study should begin with students' "real experiences and personal speech" (p. 238). Furthermore, this foundation, as the NCTE *Guidelines for the Preparation of Teachers of the English Language Arts* emphasizes, needs to be based on "pride in and respect for the variations of English that [students] and their communities use" (p. 12).

We do not always find, however, such pride in and respect for the Appalachian dialect, and it is this problem that English teachers must know how to confront.

Dealing with the Contradiction

Walt Wolfram, who has done extensive studies on the linguistic characteristics of Appalachian speech, describes a contradiction of attitudes toward the Appalachian dialect: on the one hand, "a description of a rich oral tradition with skilled verbal ability" and, on the other, a picture of "linguistically impoverished" speakers ("Language Assessment," p. 225). Wolfram explains that the sources of this contradiction are the normative

mainstream view of those people who see this variety of English "as a link with a historical linguistic tradition—and one which is positively valued" (p. 220).

People may use the words "impoverished," "distorted," "low class" to describe the Appalachian dialect, but a more accurate statement is that "the Appalachian dialect is simply different from other varieties of English in its form and usage, a unique contribution from one of the different heritages that helped establish this country" (Wolfram, "Language Assessment," p. 232).

In dealing with this contradiction in the classroom, teachers need to look, first of all, at their students not as linguistically deficient but linguistically capable (p. 226). Appalachian English has its own rules, and students who apply those rules in using their language are linguistically correct. In the context of a mainstream or standard dialect, however, experiencing the Appalachian speech forms may cause uninformed citizens and—worse yet—uninformed educators to view speakers of this dialect as culturally and linguistically disadvantaged. Thomas Cloer states that such views have resulted in "welfarism" in language arts instruction in Appalachian schools, his term for the effort to bring "disadvantaged" students a language like that found in their textbooks and used by their teachers, while totally ignoring their own language, culture, and life experiences. Evidence of "welfarism," Cloer explains, exists in the lack of "natural communication" programs that emphasize all aspects of language: listening, speaking, reading and writing (p. 236).

It is essential that teachers of the English language arts in Appalachia place their instructional goals in the contexts of their students' communities (Wolfram, p. 220), their students' capacities to make future professional and social choices, and even more importantly, in the context of their students as human beings (Daniell, p. 499). Teaching within these contexts demands a recognition that the Appalachian dialect is strongly related to historical cultural traditions and that failure to conform to that dialect is usually viewed as a rejection of one's roots—a rejection that can lead to ridicule and personal conflict (Wolfram, 1984, p. 220). In responding to the contradictory views toward Appalachian dialect, teachers, then, need to remember that Appalachian students should value their own language forms and that, in the final analysis, it must be the students themselves who will determine whether these forms are unacceptable or completely appropriate in their lives. Well informed and sensitive teachers are the key to preparing students for this kind of decision making.

Some Valuable Resource Materials for Appalachian Dialectal Study

There are in the literature on dialectology materials that can be helpful to English teachers who are working with Appalachian students or who are planning language units on Appalachian dialect. The following sources are especially valuable. Complete bibliographical information is included at the end of this article.

1. Sarah Jackson's article "Unusual Words, Expressions, and Pronunciations in a North Carolina Mountain Community" is valuable not only for its thorough analysis of one dialect but because it can serve as an excellent model for field study activities and interview techniques that teachers may want to have students use. Jackson notes that a study such as the one she has done also had "intangible results" for students, including obtaining a better understanding and knowledge of people and a greater respect for the Appalachian heritage.
2. The greatest contribution of Walt Wolfram's series of linguistic studies of Appalachian speech is the definition and analysis he presents of "Appalachian English." He warns his readers about making casual references to a generalized Appalachian dialect and explains in his articles the wide range of variation that exists in South Appalachian speech. Also important are Wolfram's discussions of relic areas in Appalachia, types of language change, and examples of stylistic variations in Appalachian speech. His insightful discussion of Appalachian storytelling is a useful resource for the teacher who wants to focus on this aspect of the Appalachian oral tradition.
3. Wylene P. Dial's article, "The Dialect of the Appalachian People," in the West Virginia Mountain Heritage Program's 1980 publication is an informative discussion tracing the roots of Appalachian dialect. Dial's article provides teachers with a good background and is written in an informal, entertaining manner that would appeal to students.
4. *Voices from the Hills*, Robert Higgs and Ambrose Manning's collection of Southern Appalachian literature and criticism, contains a number of selections having to do with dialect. Earl F. Schrock's "An Examination of Dialect in Anne W. Armstrong's *This Day and Time*," James Reese's "The Myth of the Southern Appalachian Dialect as a Mirror of the Mountaineer," and Jim Wayne Miller's "A Mirror for Appalachia" are three of the selections, each providing a different perspective on dialect study. This excellent collection also includes examples of Appalachian poetry and fiction by such writers as Mary Murfree, John Fox, Jr., Jesse Stuart, James Still, and Harriette Arnow. Not only do these works offer illustrations of eye dialect but, as in the case of Arnow's *The Dollmaker* (the collection contains an excerpt from the novel), often depict experiences of people whose dialects are the source of personal criticism and problems. The responses students have to these literary works can be the basis of important classroom discussions on dialect.

Summary

In planning a secondary language arts curriculum, teachers and administrators need to give dialectology serious consideration. Teachers who are knowledgeable about varieties of the English language can help students understand not only their own but all dialects as a legacy and a natural part of people's lives. Whether it be an Appalachian variety or

any other form, a dialect should never, especially as a result of a classroom experience, be viewed as an inferior use of language. Teachers need to instill in students an appreciation of dialects and help them eliminate any uncertainties and insecurities that may have come from the common "my English-this English" conflict. The English class should become the setting for learning about language not as some artificial rule-bound communication system but as a vital and ever-changing human invention.

Alfred North Whitehead wrote that "There is only one subject-matter for education, and that is Life in all its manifestations." Language is truly one of the most important manifestations of our lives; a curriculum that neglects it does all of us a great injustice.

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Although all writing involves writers in a creative act, creative writing is categorized by Britton as "poetic" and Kinneavy as "literary," where the emphasis is on literary form. Having students engage in creative writing is not a frill although it is something most students enjoy. It is, however, more than assigning students to write a poem or a short story. Articles for this issue might address: What strategies help students write a poem, a short story, or a play? How is creative writing linked to literature study? What are the skills learned through creative writing that apply to other forms of writing (transactional)? How do we evaluate creative writing? Creative writing—how much? for whom? in what ways? How is creative thinking linked to creative writing? Articles might explore theoretical issues and/or describe practical approaches.

DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 2, 1987

Noah Webster: The Legacy of "The Prompter"

Lynne Alvine

Twentieth Century Americans use the term *levis* synonymously with *blue jeans* without ever thinking of the entrepreneur named Levi Straus who first put rivets in denim pants to make them more durable. They curl up near their Franklin stoves with a Tom Collins without giving a thought to Benjamin Franklin, the stove's inventor, or to the bartender who first concocted the drink that bears his name. Similarly, the name Webster has gone through the process of eponyming and now often is used to refer to any dictionary. When a question of spelling, pronunciation, or word meaning arises, the advice typically given is, "Look it up in your Webster's!" A standard gift item for the college-bound high school graduate each spring is the latest edition of *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* or a similar reference tool with *Webster* in its title. Thus, Webster's has become synonymous with *dictionary*, and *Webster* is a household word in Twentieth Century America.

Although literate Americans might know or guess that Webster was the name of a writer of dictionaries, many would admit to a confusion as to whether the lexicographer's first name was Daniel or Noah. The words of Noah Webster have appeared in print before the eyes of generations of Americans, yet there is not a single reference to anything he said or wrote in *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*. His unrelated contemporary, the orator and statesman Daniel Webster is, however, quoted numerous times. It is, indeed, probably Daniel not Noah Webster whom posterity more often remembers. Though his efforts on behalf of the developing American nation might be said to compare favorably with those of Daniel Webster and other revered, familiar patriots named Franklin, Jefferson, and Washington, Noah Webster, the man, has remained an historical enigma.

Who was this man named Noah whose surname has become a household word? Who was this man named Webster who never appeared on center stage in the unfolding drama of the emerging American nation, but who was, by his own description, "The Prompter" in the play (Warfel, p.vii)? This staunch patriot whose single-minded vision that American political unity and the preservation of American liberty depended upon the development of a uniform American language was the man who used his

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pen as the tool whereby he, more than any other individual, was to shape a uniformity of pronunciation and orthography in American English that would become the standard for the English-speaking world.

The Life and Career of Noah Webster

Noah Webster's religious heritage was strict Puritan Calvinism. His political heritage included, on his father's side, a great, great grandfather who was an early governor of Connecticut and, on his mother's side, William Bradford, the famous early governor of the Plymouth colony. Born into a family that valued education, he was a freshman at Yale College at the eve of the American Revolution. When George Washington came through New Haven en route to take command of the American Army at Cambridge in the spring of 1775, it was Noah Webster who marched alongside the American leader playing his fife (Scudder, 1886, p. 2-5). Later it would be with his pen that he would accompany the march of a young nation toward social and political unity.

After finishing at Yale, the young Webster turned first to schoolteaching and then to the practice of law to sustain himself (Babbidge, p. 28). When the Revolution interrupted the importation of such materials as books from England, he turned to the writing of school texts and by 1782 had written Part I of *A Grammatical Institute of the English Language*, a three-part work which would eventually consist of *The American Spelling-Book* (the legendary "Blue-backed Speller"), *A Plain and Comprehensive Grammar...*, and *An American Selection of Lessons in Reading and Speaking*...(Scudder, p. 33). But Webster's reason for writing school texts was only partially pragmatic. He was already seeing the importance of public education to a free, self-governing society. According to historian Homer D. Babbidge, he was infused with a "keen desire to play an influential role in the affairs of his country" (Babbidge, p. 28). That desire was to work itself out in a lengthy career that saw him become a prolific essayist, a writer of numerous school texts, and, finally, America's premier lexicographer.

"The Prompter's" career had two main "acts," one of intense political involvement, the other of abject disengagement from the political arena. First he was a "militant advocate of American union and cultural and political independence." The one great truth that colored his writings was, according to Babbidge, that "liberty could be preserved only through the strength of unity." In the second act of his career, he became the "classic symbol of the lost cause of American Federalism" as he turned his efforts away from political issues and toward a deeper understanding of the mind and spirit. It was during this second phase that he focused his energies on lexicography (Babbidge, p. 4). It was language, then, that became not only the medium, but also the subject of Webster's expression of his heartfelt patriotism throughout his life.

Webster's Common Culture 'Experiment'—The Rationale

Language is inherently dynamic rather than static; it is fluid, never fixed. Although the invention of the printing press in 1457 had done much to slow the rate of change, in Shakespeare's Elizabethan and Jacobean England, spelling and pronunciation were still often arbitrary. The subsequent emergence of dictionaries in the early Eighteenth Century had taken the standardization of language a step further. Whether English would become the predominant language of the emerging American nation was not really ever at issue in that the thirteen colonies had been settled by English-speaking people. During the first decade of its nationhood, however, the Confederation of American States found itself with wide divergences of dialects from locality to locality and from region to region—and with little uniformity in spelling and usage. Though he was aware of the impossibility and undesirability of attempting to fix language in any permanent form, Webster wanted to standardize an English that would be uniquely American.

In one of his essays in *Dissertations of the English Language* published in Boston in 1789, he sounded the call for a national culture which would stand independent from that of the mother country, stating that "...a future separation of the American tongue from the English [is] necessary and unavoidable." His three main reasons for such a separation were (1) the geographical distance of America from England; (2) the fact that America was a new country which would have new social interactions among its people and new combinations of ideas in arts and sciences; and (3) American citizens would have "intercourse with tribes wholly unknown in Europe." He went on eloquently to predict that his countrymen would

> produce...a language in North America as different from the future language of England, as the modern Dutch, Danish and Swedish are from the German, or from one another: Like remote branches of a tree springing from the same stock; or rays of light shot from the same center, and diverging from each other, in proportion to their distance from the point of separation. (Webster, 1789, as reprinted in Calhoun, p. 90)

Although he concedes that he is uncertain as to whether uniformity in pronunciation is possible, he sees his common culture "experiment" as the only way to find out.

That the proper vehicle for such an experiment should be the public educational system is expressed in that same essay. Webster's intention is clear: "Nothing but the establishment of schools and some uniformity in the use of books, can annihilate differences in speaking and preserve the purity of the American tongue." And his rationale is, of course, politically based. He continues: "...provincial accents are disagreeable to strangers and sometimes have an unhappy effect upon social affections...our political harmony is therefore concerned in a uniformity of language" (Webster, 1789, as reprinted in Calhoun, p. 89).

Webster's somewhat simplistic theory of learning can be seen in one of his 1783 observations found in the reprint of his "Letters to a Young

Gentleman": "The rudiments of knowledge we receive by tradition, and our first actions are, in a good degree, modeled by imitation. Nor ought it to be otherwise" (Webster, 1783, as reprinted in Babbidge, p. 156). If people learned by imitation of whatever was set before them, then Webster was determined that what was set before young Americans in their school textbooks should be solid moral teachings and patriotic ideals presented in his standardized American language.

Explicit Intentions as Found in the Essays of Webster

In the first phase of his life, then, Webster worked very hard to forge public unity via the public school classroom. With his writings, the middle-aged "Prompter" accompanied the journey of a young America in much the same way as he had as a youth played the fife alongside General George Washington. It was his belief in the need for an American language that Homer Babbidge, Jr., suggests was the sounding of the "dominant chord in the nationalistic score of Webster's life" (Babbidge, p. 8). That chord is sounded again and again in the various writings of Noah Webster from the appearance of his first major work in 1783 until he withdrew from the political activist role to begin work on his comprehensive dictionary in the late 1790s. It rings through his political essays as well as through the introductions to his various textbooks as illustrated in the following excerpts from his writings which are presented chronologically.

In his preface to the first edition of *An American Spelling-Book*, Webster makes the case for the need of such a volume. He says that he has written it because "...in the spelling and pronunciation of words, we have no guide, or none but such as lead into innumerable errours." He then offers "...the following little system, which is designed to introduce uniformity and accuracy of pronunciation into common schools." He makes his overall intention explicit as he goes on to state:

> Such a standard, universally used in schools, would, in time, demolish those odious distinctions of provincial dialects which are the objects of reciprocal ridicule in the United States.... For America in her infancy to adopt the present maxims of the old world would be to stamp the wrinkles of decrepit age upon the bloom of youth and to plant the seeds of decay in a vigorous constitution.

Thus, he introduces the "Blue-backed Speller" which had, in his words, ". . . cost me much labor to form a plan that would be both *simple* and *accurate* (Webster, 1783, as reprinted in Babbidge, p. 20-25).

In his "Plan for the Union of the American States," a treatise on the theory and practice of political science which was published in *Sketches of American Policy* in 1785, Webster writes of the need for strong central government. The essay, which was influential in bringing about a Constitutional Convention for the purpose of revising the structure of the early American government, deals primarily with the respective powers of federal and state governments. Along with his political views, Webster calls for broad-based education, for "the general diffusion of knowledge" as a means to the development of a "national character." He cautions against

the imitation of the manners, language and vices of foreigners and says it is ridiculous for Americans to be the "apes of Europeans" (Webster, 1785, as reprinted in Babbidge, p. 30-45).

In his 1787 preface to *An American Selection of Lessons in Reading and Speaking* (Part III of *A Grammatical Institute . . .*), Webster again first makes the case for the need of such a work. He lists several texts available on exercises in reading and speaking, then charges that "...none of these, however judicious the selection, is calculated for American schools," and that it is "...a capital fault in all our schools that the books generally used contain subjects wholly uninteresting to our youth..." His intention in presenting his own text of exercises for instruction follows. "I have endeavored to make such a collection of essays as should form the morals as well as improve the knowledge of youth." And his overall aim, his dominant chord, echoes near the end of that preface: "To refine and establish our language, to facilitate the acquisition of grammatical knowledge, and to diffuse the principles of virtue and patriotism is the task I have laboured to perform" (Webster, 1787, Preface).

In one of the lessons in the *American Selections* called "Remarks on the Manners, Government, Laws, and Domestic Debt of America," Webster argues for the throwing off of all British customs and manners. He includes once again the call for Americans to avoid imitation of the faddish corruptions of British speech, citing "...the long catalogue of errors in pronunciation and of false idioms which disfigure the language of our mighty fine speakers." He goes on to predict that"...should this imitation continue, we shall be hurried down the stream of corruption with older nations, and our language, with theirs, be lost in an ocean of perpetual changes" (Webster, 1787, as reprinted in Babbidge, p. 66).

In his 1789 "Call for a National Culture" published in *Dissertations on the English Language*, Webster plays out the major movement of his nationalistic score. He praises the speech of freestanding American yeomen and criticizes once again the limitations of British publications:

> ...the people of America, particularly those of English descent, speak the most pure English known in the world...There is no Dictionary yet published in Great Britain, in which so many of the analogies of the language and the just rules of pronunciation are preserved, as in the common practice of the well informed Americans, who have never consulted any foreign standard. (Webster, 1789, as reprinted in Calhoun, p. 95-96)

He goes on to call, once again, for Americans to throw out the "corrupting influence of English court fads and English writers' affectations."

In the latter part of the political activist phase of his career, Webster's efforts focused increasingly on the advancement of the cause of education. "On the Education of Youth in America" was the opening essay in his 1790 publication titled *A Collection of Essays and Fugitiv Writings*. He opens the essay by suggesting that it is in the best interests of government to assume the responsibility of education to form the character of individuals which "forms the character of a nation" (Webster, 1790, p. 1). His theory

of learning by imitation surfaces again as he makes the case for the value of moral training and the fostering of patriotism in schools:

> Every child in America should be acquainted with his own country. He should read books that furnish him with ideas that will be useful to him in life and practice. As soon as he opens his lips he should rehearse the history of his own country—he should lisp the praises of liberty and of those illustrious heroes and statesman who have wrought a revolution in her favor. (Webster, 1790, p. 23)

Thus, "The Prompter" worked busily in the wings striving to shape a unity of national culture with the influence of his pen, as the maturing nation moved toward national political unity.

The Legacy—Webster's Most Influential Publications

His intentions were clear, and he expounded on them repeatedly in these and other of his writings. But what was the impact of Webster's labors? Would America have moved to a standardized language had there been no Noah Webster in the wings?

It is a futile exercise to speculate on how history might have worked itself out had this or that factor been different. Events happen; history records them. It is possible, however, to look at the publishing success, especially of two of Webster's works, and thereby, to see something of the impact of his efforts. Those publications are the "Blue-backed Speller" (*An American Spelling-Book*, Part I of *A Grammatical Institute of the English Language*) published initially in 1783, and *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, first published in 1828.

On October 7, 1783, the *Connecticut Courant* advertised "The First Part of *A Grammatical Institute of the English Language* published by Messrs. Hudson and Goodwin, the publisher of the *Courant*. The ad did not mention that the schoolmaster-author had had to underwrite the costs of publication himself. Though it had a tenuous beginning, five million copies of the volume had sold by 1803. In the year 1807, 200,000 copies were sold, and by 1837, the total had reached 15 million. By 1880, when the William H. Appleton Company took over publication, Webster's "Blue-backed Speller" was selling a million copies a year, and was second only to the Bible in annual sales. Eventually, the text had gone through six editions as *A Grammatical Institute*, 254 editions as *The American Spelling Book*, and 128 editions as *The Elementary Spelling Book*. Since 1845, there have been numerous adaptations and reprints (Cremin, preface to a 1962 reprint). The "Blue-backed Speller" was the "core curriculum" for many generations of American youth and did a great deal toward the achievement of Webster's goal of a standardization of orthography and pronunciation in the American language.

His other great work was the dictionary. In his preface to the 1828 dictionary, Webster said that "classical scholar and divine" Dr. Goodrich of Durham had suggested back in 1784 that he write a dictionary but that he was unable to work on one due to his need to earn a living. Disillusioned by the nation's shift toward "democracy" and away from his own federalist

convictions, Webster turned toward the challenge of lexicography in the late 1790s (Webster, 1828, Preface). In 1806, he published a small volume called *A Compendious Dictionary of the English Language*. In the preface to that work, Webster acknowledges the limitations of that text and states that "...a careful revision of our present dictionaries is absolutely necessary to a correct knowledge of the language. He goes on to blast English lexicographers Johnson and Loweth, charging that they "...have mistaken many of the fundamental principles of the language" (Webster, 1806, as reprinted in Babbidge, p. 133).

Then Webster began work on a comprehensive dictionary of the American language. As he worked, he found his plan changing because of his discovery of a need for more and more thorough research and as he came to "new views of language" and found "the genuine principles on which languages are constructed." By 1828, his monumental task completed, Noah Webster published *An American Dictionary of the English Language*. In the preface, he once again makes his intention explicit:

> It has been my aim...to ascertain the true principles of the language, in its orthography and structure; to purify it from some palpable errors and reduce the number of anomalies, thus giving it more regularity and consistency in its forms, both of words and sentences; and in this manner, to furnish a standard of our vernacular tongue, which shall not be ashamed to bequeath to three hundred millions of people, who are destined to occupy, and I hope, to adorn that vast territory within our jurisdiction. (Webster, 1828, Preface)

The success of the more complete dictionary was not so immediate as that of the "Blue-backed Speller," but its impact was eventually to be as far-reaching. Only 2500 copies of the 1828 edition were sold at $20 each. The 1841 second edition, a two-volume set priced at $15, did as poorly. In fact, many of the unsold copies remained unbound at the time of Webster's death in 1843. His heirs sold them to J. S. and C. Adams of Amherst, Massachusetts, who also had difficulty moving them, and who eventually sold them to G. and C. Merriam of Springfield, Massachusetts. The Merriams contracted with the heirs of Webster for the rights to publish revisions and began to specialize in the publishing of law books and dictionaries. In 1847, they published a new one-volume edition and sold it for $6. Noah Webster's son-in-law was its editor, and specialists in various fields had been hired to write and check specialized definitions. With additions in the areas of ecclesiastical history, chemistry, mathematics, geology, astronomy, fine arts, and law, the number of entries rose from 70,000 to 85,000. Though it is now standard practice, the use of specialists for the 1847 edition was an innovation. Thus, the Merriam line of Webster's dictionaries was begun (Babbidge, Afterword p. 175-176).

Following the success of the Merriam-Webster Dictionary of 1847, other publishers began to use the Webster name. Though the Merriams fought to keep them from doing so, the copyright on the name had expired with the copyright on the 1828 edition. In 1917, the courts ruled that any publisher (other than Merriam) using the Webster name had to indicate that its

dictionary was not from the Webster line. Even today, many still trade on the name, printing the disclaimer in small type (Babbidge, Afterword p. 177).

Though Webster's 1828 *An American Dictionary of the English Language* was not initially a financial triumph, it did signify a quantum leap in the field of lexicography. It contained 12,000 terms which previously had not been listed in any English dictionary, including many objects, qualities, and actions that had an American origin. It also defined many technical and scientific terms which English lexicographers had omitted or overlooked (Pei, Introduction, p. 19). As a further indication of the impact of the 1828 comprehensive dictionary, according to Babbidge, it was being cited by British courts as early as 1830-1832 (Babbidge, Afterword).

After completing the 1828 dictionary, Noah Webster added three works to his collection of school textbooks. In 1830, he published *Biography, for the Use of Schools* which included 37 short biographies of historical persons. He followed that in 1831 with *The Elementary Primer*. It included 36 pages of pictures of objects familiar to children as well as some children's poems. Webster's last significant textbook was called *History of the United States* published in 1832. It was a selective history of the American heritage, including "...the tower of Babel, the migration to America, and the conquest of South America by Spaniards" (Babbidge, Afterword, p. 177). It is interesting to note that he chose to include the Biblical explanation for the multiplicity of languages as a significant historical event.

Though his other textbooks and various essays had their effect on the young nation's educational and political evolution, it was the "Blue-backed Speller" and the 1828 dictionary that were to make for Webster the greatest strides in his crusade for unity through language reform.

Was Webster's intense concern for the future of the American nation justified? A look at the political uncertainties of his times suggests that it probably was. There was no American past; hence, there was no common heritage on which to build a sense of national unity. The firmly entrenched institutions that had long served to unify the various European nations—monarchy, aristocracy, the Church, the University—were not a part of the American scene. Prior to the writing of the Constitution in 1787, the American states were only loosely confederated.

'A Prophet Knows No Honour...'

How well received was Webster by his contemporaries? In those same essays in which he presents his arguments for language reform, there is an undertone that suggests a sensitivity to his critics. In his preface to *An American Spelling-Book*, he writes: "The criticisms of those who know more will be received with gratitude; the censure or ridicule of those who know less will be inexcusable" (Webster, 1783, Preface). His impatience with his critics who held to the speakers and writers from England as the models for speech and writing in America comes to the surface in the introduction to his 1806 *Compendious Dictionary of the English Language*:

> From a different class of men...whose criticism would sink the literature even lower that the distorted representations of foreign reviewers, whose veneration for trans-Atlantic authors leads them to hold American writers in unmerited contempt — from such men I neither expect nor solicit favor...Men who...exhibit proofs of our national inferiority...are certainly not destined to decide the ultimate fate of this performance. (Webster, 1806, as reprinted in Babbidge, p. 136)

Perhaps it was his sensitivity to the critics among his contemporaries that held him somewhat in check in pushing for his language reform, for his essay "The Reforming of Spelling" published in the appendix to *Dissertations on the English Language* in 1789 called for a much broader-based, a much more sweeping change in spelling than eventually was to appear in the 1828 dictionary. In that essay, Webster proposed three principal alterations which would have moved the American English orthography system much closer to its pronunciation. He suggested: (1) the omission of all superfluous or silent letters; (2) the substitution of a character that has a certain definite sound for one that is more vague and indeterminate; and (3) the addition of a "point or trifling alteration" in a character without substitution of a new character (*e.g.*, using "th" or "~~th~~" to differentiate the two sounds represented by that same grapheme in the traditional spelling system). His explicit intentions for such spelling reform were simplicity, uniformity, reduction in letters required to express meaning, and differentiating the American language from English. He goes on to list and then to refute all of the potential objections to his new orthography (Webster, 1789, as reprinted in Babbidge, pp. 98-101).

Had he included in his dictionary all of the changes proposed in that essay, the American language might look quite different today, because the changes he did introduce have stayed in the language (*e.g.*, *labor* for *labour* and *theater* for *theatre*) (Introduction to 1828 Dictionary, Pei, p. 19). Had he pushed for all of his other earlier suggestions, American English today would quite likely have much less divergence between sound and spelling. School children might feel less oppressed, and persons acquiring English as a second language might be much less frustrated as they strive to master the language of world-wide business and commerce.

The Vision of The Prompter

Could Noah Webster have forseen such an eventual impact of the American language on the world? There are hints that he had just such a vision in his essays. In the 1789 "Call for a Common Culture" (*Dissertations on the English Language*), he wrote: "...within a century and a half, North America will be peopled with a hundred millions of men, all speaking the same language" (Webster, 1789, as reprinted in Calhoun, p. 90). In the preface to *A Compendious Dictionary of the English Language*, he wrote:

> In fifty years from this time the American-English will be spoken by more people than all the other dialects of the language, and in one hundred and thirty years by more people than any other language on the globe, not excepting the Chinese." (Webster, 1906, as reprinted in Babbidge, p. 135)

And in the preface to *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, he echoes the same vision: "...our language, within 2 centuries, will be spoken by more people...than any other language on earth, except the Chinese, and even that may not be an exception" (Webster, 1828, as reprinted in Babbidge, p. 170). Perhaps the most ironic example of Webster's vision of the future of American English is found in an 1816 letter in response to the criticism of John Pickering:

> But I trust the time will come when the English will be convinced that the intellectual faculties of their descendants have not degenerated in America, and that we can contend with them in LETTERS with as much success as upon the OCEAN. (Webster, 1816, as reprinted in Babbidge, p. 151)

Whether the English have ever become completely convinced that American intellect is not inferior to theirs may be debatable, but the eventual success of Webster's Dictionary of 1828 in England, indeed, as a standard throughout the English-speaking world, is historical fact.

In his introduction to a 1958 reprint of the 1783 speller, historian Henry Steele Commager argues that the accomplishments of Noah Webster qualify him as a "Founding Father" who is, perhaps, deserving of more attention than history has accorded him. Commager makes a good case for Webster to be considered as the Father of the American Language, American Education, American Political Thought, American Journalism, American Science, American Copyright Laws, the American Census, American History, American Economics, and even of the American Church. Webster may not have been the most influential individual in each of those areas, but the point is that he had an impact on all of them (Commager, pp. 2-3). His major accomplishment, however, in the words of Commager, was that he

> ...helped free generations of Americans from a sense of inferiority about their language, and gave them instead a sense of the dignity of their speech...(he) contributed more than any other single person to a uniform American speech, and to the avoidance of those differences in accent and vocabulary that might proclaim differences in background, in class, or in religion. (Commager, p. 4)

Noah Webster believed that in order for American liberty to remain secure, the inhabitants of the land had to become one people, embracing a national culture and speaking a standardized American language. The crusade for national unity which he carried out with the writing of essays, dictionaries, a spelling book, histories, and other textbooks, appears to have been a successful "experiment." American liberty still stands, and the American language is a standard throughout the English-speaking world. Though Noah Webster, the founding father, ironically remains unknown to many of his heirs, his legacy is renewed each time one of them has occasion to "Look it up in Webster's."

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"It's *Just* a Question of Semantics!"

Marjorie M. Kaiser

In uttering the comment that heads this article, a speaker may suggest that issues of meaning are relatively unimportant, merely mechanical and thus peripheral somehow to honest, lucid communication. Those who have studied semantics are typically as disquieted by such comments as rhetoricians are by the negative meanings the press and the public readily assign to the word *rhetoric* —that is, "it was all rhetoric," meaning it had no substance. Scholars and language educators have long fought such partial understanding of the term *semantics* and urged that the study of meaning be the heart of the language arts curriculum because no other aspect of language study is so critical to learning to read, write, speak, and listen.

In a broad outline for the curriculum of the future, Neil Postman (1983) contrasts the analogic, non-discursive, easy, and entertaining television curriculum with the school curriculum, which, he claims, even at its worst in the past, has had a rational order, and organizing principles of some kind. "More and more," says Postman, "the typical school curriculum reflects far too much the fragmentation one finds in the television's weekly schedule." He sees this fragmentation as "hostile to language and language development . . . and in a general way to conceptualization" and intellectual engagement (p. 314). Selecting the ascent of humanity as the basic theme, Postman proposes a curriculum that "stresses history, the scientific mode of thinking, the disciplined use of language, a wide-ranging knowledge of the arts and religion, and the continuity of the human enterprise" thus providing a "corrective for the anti-historical, non-analytical, non-sequential, immediately gratifying biases of television" (p. 314).

Postman insists that every school teach a course in semantics—the processes by which people make meaning. He laments that we as English teachers have mostly ignored semantics. Except for a few years in the late sixties and early seventies when the subject provided a blessed relief from phonemes, morphemes, and sentence patterns, I suspect that he is right. It is true that some few pages about how words mean now are included in many language books, midst the grammar and usage, but in general semantics does not occupy a place of honor in the typical middle or high school language arts curriculum, much less merit a course of its own. Postman has difficulty understanding how we who claim to teach reading and writing can do so effectively without teaching the basic concepts of semantics.

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Despite what some have seen as his flip-flopping on certain curriculum issues in the last several years, Postman has long adhered to his conviction about the importance of semantics study in schools. In *Linguistics: A Revolution in Teaching* (1966), Postman and Weingartner identified the study of semantics as a "fugitive enterprise" (p. 150). Since that time semantics concepts have to some extent cropped up in English language arts curricula in critical reading exercises, composition units on persuasive writing, and more recent materials focused on the development of thinking skills. The National Council of Teachers of English has passed resolutions indicating the necessity of educating students toward critical sensitivity to the language of politics, advertising, and the media. The Council's establishment of the Committee on Public Doublespeak has publicized nationally its commitment to helping prepare responsible and articulate language users who can cope with an environment increasingly characterized by misinformation and manipulative language.

In the 1982 *Essentials of English* document, the concern of the profession for including concepts of semantics in the language arts curriculum permeates the statement in sections on *Language*, *Reading*, *Writing*, *Speaking*, *Listening*, and especially *Logical* and *Critical Thinking*. In the introductory statements under *Language* can be found the following statements:

> Language is a subject worthy of study in itself, but language in use always exists in a setting involving people and situations.
>
> Continuing attention to language makes students aware how language functions and helps them control and use it in increasingly effective ways.

Objectives in this section include "students should recognize that language is a powerful tool for thinking and learning," "students should recognize how context—topic, purpose, audience—influences the structure and use of language," and "students should understand how language can act as a unifying force among the citizens of a nation."

In the introductory section on *Communication Skills*, the writers define communication as "language in action by which individuals participate in the affairs of society." These skills prepare students to "engage in fluent and responsible communication and to analyze information that comes to them." Specifically under the *Reading* section, we find that "students should learn to read accurately and make valid inferences." Under *Writing*, the document states that "students should learn the techniques of writing for appealing to others and persuading them." Under *Speaking*, "students should learn to present arguments in orderly and convincing ways and to interpret and assess various kinds of communication." Under *Listening*, "students should learn to evaluate the messages and effects of mass communication." In the section on using *Media*, "students should realize that new modes of communication demand a new kind of literacy." And under *Logical Thinking*, "students should learn to test the validity of an assertion by examining the evidence, and should learn to detect fallacies in reasoning." Especially interesting is the fact that every objective under

Critical Thinking relates to semantics concepts. That section states that students should learn

1. to ask questions in order to discover meaning;
2. to differentiate between subjective and objective viewpoints;
3. to discriminate between opinion and fact;
4. to evaluate the intentions and messages of speakers and writers, especially attempts to manipulate the language in order to deceive; and
5. to make judgments based on criteria that can be supported and explained.

I think as a profession we might agree that the knowledge of semantics embedded in this document could indeed help improve our students' reading and writing skills. But let's back up. What are the basic semantics concepts? And how can we teach them as we teach reading and writing? First, what are the general concepts of semantics? It seems to me that they are effectively outlined in Hayakawa's text, *Language and Thought in Action* (1978), still a standard semantics text for both high school and college students.

Symbol-thing Confusion

The basic principle to be learned here is that language is arbitrary, that the name is not the thing. As listeners, speakers, readers, and writers, we assign the meanings to words. Any classroom sharing of responses to literature illustrates this principle. The danger of confusing symbols with things is clearly evident in the behavior of would-be censors who fear that reading the word *rape* is equivalent to committing the act. But inexperienced students often cling desperately to symbols rather than to what those symbols stand for to them and others and are oblivious to the notions (a) that writers predict that readers will make certain associations as those writers consciously choose certain words and (b) that readers shape definitions of words by their own unique experiences. Good readers do not simply take words at face value but examine them in the context of a writer's purpose and their own experience.

Irresponsible confusion over things and names abounds. Columnist Ellen Goodman (1985) reports being in an airport restaurant where she ordered "fresh fruit salad," only to be served canned fruit cocktail. When she raised a question as to why the dish was identified as "fresh," the waitress merely smiled and said, "Oh, they just call it that." More seriously, government officials refer to lying as "misinformation," perhaps hoping that by changing the name they lessen the heinousness of the act.

Dangers of Over-generalization

Without learning to generalize about the world we live in, we would never manage to grow up. The danger is in generalizing on the basis of too little data or too little experience. Responding automatically with generalizations to the world, and especially to the people in it, prevents us from seeing the differences among the unique and thus eventually to

the stereotyping of racism and sexism. Omitting such words as *always*, *never*, *all*, *everybody*, and *everyone* from our daily language can have a salutary effect on our thinking and communication with others.

Differences Among Reports/Inferences/Judgments

Knowing the differences among these three ways of getting at the truth can help readers and listeners become more suspicious. Reports are verifiable; inferences are based on limited information and speculation. Judgments carry values and tend to discourage further thought for readers, writers, speakers, *and* listeners.

Examples:

REPORT	I saw a shabbily-dressed woman with a large shopping bag hurriedly leave the K-Mart.	
INFERENCES	I bet she was a shop-lifter.	The check-out clerk probably joked about her appearance.
JUDGMENTS	These bag ladies are an embarrassment to the community.	People are rude and insensitive.

Dangers of Classification

Hayakawa suggested that we use *ETC* to indicate that no word ever means the same thing twice. Labeling a person a *preppy* or a *punker* simply boxes that person up so that we can quit thinking about the individual's complexity. In response to a Hugh Haynie cartoon (1986) satirizing Casper Wineberger's problems over faulty military headgear, a reader wrote, "Hugh Haynie's name doesn't sound Russian to me, but with his anti-American attitude, I'm led to believe he is a Communist."

Dangers of Abstraction

Excellence in Education

Anonymous Student

Education in the United States, as it stands now, is at the very least unacceptable. In order for us, as a society, to procure a salient system of education major changes must be enacted. Only if these changes are brought about can we once again establish ourselves as a reputable nation.

The major issue of education is the problem of funding. In the national budget, education makes up only a minute percentage of what it should. The need to have an adequate defense for our country is understandable but in the direction we are now heading there will be nothing worthy of defending. Due to the deficiency of federal funding, the individual states are forced to carry the burden of producing an acceptable education. Increasing taxes will not even be necessary, a mere redistribution of funds would be sufficient. Only through substantially increased funding can we aid our present system of education.

Another problem hindering education is both the quantity and quality of our teachers. Our nation has a shortage of qualified teachers in all basic subjects. This dilemma cannot be rectified immediately but can be solved in the near future. For the present time, there are methods in which we can upgrade the caliber of our teachers and attract future prospects. These would include, competency tests for teachers at two year intervals and raising their salaries in general. Teachers

> who have taught for an extensive period time would benefit the greatest. Without a supply of excellent teachers, education reform could not be possible.
>
> The education system of this nation, at present, is in a state of peasantry. Our culture, as we know it, can not endure. As a society we must take steps to avoid this or we will be conquered not by our opponents' political or militaristic ideals but by our own incompetence. Protective measures are within our grasp, if they are not enacted, we will surely be planning our own downfall.

After reading this excerpt from a student essay, one wonders what it is about. Where are the referents? Where is the concrete support for the many generalizations? Where are the specifics? The facts? The details? Where is the logic? What are the assumptions beneath this grandiose prose? If we were to apply Stuart Chase's "blab" test (substituting "blab" for every abstraction with no clear referent), we would have little remaining save a skeleton.

Distinguishing Among Informative/Affective/Directive Language

> Bob, aspirin is known to relieve inflammation of the joints.
>
> (informative language)
>
> Surely, you want to control your arthritis.
>
> (affective language)
>
> I suggest you start the medication immediately.
>
> (directive language)

Examining language with these three purposes in mind can make us aware of our own goals when we speak or write and of those of others as we listen and read. This awareness may help keep us honest and may protect us to some extent from being manipulated by others.

Dangers of Two-valued Orientation

Only scientifically verifiable reports have *yes* or *no* answers. Very few important problems are so simple. Try to tackle the following questions simply:

Do you love or hate school?

Should students with AIDS be allowed to stay in school?

If you're not Pro-life, does that mean you're in favor of child murder?

Use in the Curriculum

Taken together these categories form the backbone of any course or unit in semantics. Without knowledge of them and their application in the intensely verbal world of the information age, students may fail to become mature readers, listeners, or thinkers; neither will they excel as persuasive writers or speakers. Immature readers tend to take words at face value; they tend to assume that the words are things they stand for and are ignorant of the notion that words are only arbitrary symbols to which users attach their own meanings. Thus, they search for meaning in the marks on the page rather than using those marks as a kind of blueprint to which they bring their own experience, associations, and meanings. Mature readers are able to 1) utilize personal experience and associations

in responding and interpreting and evaluating written material; 2) distinguish between fact and opinion; 3) suspend judgment until all facts are in; 4) draw valid inferences from reports; 5) deal critically with increasingly higher levels of abstraction; and 6) judge the validity of ideas.

It has long been established that students who understand the concepts of general semantics score higher on tests of critical reading than those who do not (Livingston, 1965; Lauer, 1965). Understanding these concepts helps readers see that a writer makes conscious choices in order to elicit certain responses from readers. They understand how a writer predicts that readers will make certain associations with words. They are flexible enough not to trust their first impressions and to ask *why?* and *how do you know?* of a writer's generalizations. They know that words must be analyzed in regard to their context, a writer's avowed purpose or the assumed intention, and the reader's readiness (experience, predispositions, philosophical, political, or moral stance). They are aware when words are being used to manipulate them, and they are capable of uncovering a writer's basic assumptions and of evaluating their own. They recognize that appeals made to them are often based on overgeneralizations and emotionalism.

Helping immature readers become mature ones takes time and effort. Postman recounts a startling experience he had with a former student, Melissa, many years after she had been in one of his low ability English classes. He felt he had taught his heart out with Melissa, but she was a student who continued to read literally, taking everything she read at face value. When he saw her, he wondered how she had gotten on in life since he had taught her. She had been married for ten years, she said, and had four children at home, was expecting another in a few weeks. "I'm worried, though," she said to Postman, "how my husband will deal with the new one. I read somewhere that every fifth child born in the world is Chinese." Postman confesses that he had obviously failed Melissa. The materials he had used with her in trying to teach semantics concepts were either way over her head or were so boring that she could not bear to read them.

It seems to me that we must teach critical reading skills/semantics concepts directly with material that students are capable of reading and are interested in reading. Of course, advertising material comes first to mind, but letters to the editor, community political statements, editorials, and the like will do nicely. A teacher can directly teach the previously listed concepts of general semantics in fairly short order through explanation, illustration, and analysis of prepared materials. Also useful are aids such as the Propaganda Game which help students learn the propaganda techniques. But very quickly students need to apply their knowledge and recognition skills to language in their own school or local environment: literature, newspapers, school publications, community publications, magazine articles of current interest, correspondence, radio and television commercials and news, and even popular song lyrics.

Consider how a knowledge of semantics concepts can help us read critically

these paragraphs from Phyllis Schlafly's *The Power of the Positive Woman* (1977).

> Another silliness of the women's liberationists is their frenetic desire to force all women to accept the title *Ms.*in place of *Miss* or *Mrs.* If Gloria Steinem and Betty Friedan want to call themselves *Ms.* in order to conceal their marital status, their wishes should be respected.
>
> But that doesn't satisfy the women's liberationists. They want all women to be compelled to use *Ms.* whether they like it or not. The women's liberation movement has been waging a persistent campaign to browbeat the media into using *Ms.* as the standard title for all women. The women's liberationists have already succeeded in getting the Department of Health, Education and Welfare to forbid schools and colleges from identifying women students as *Miss* or *Mrs.*
>
> All polls show that the majority of women do not care to be called *Ms.* A Roper poll indicated that 81 percent of the women questioned said they prefer *Miss* or *Mrs.* to *Ms.* Most married women feel they worked hard for the *r* in their names, and they don't care to be gratuitously deprived of it. Most single women don't care to have their name changed to an unfamiliar title that at best conveys overtones of feminist ideology and is polemical in meaning, and at worst connotes misery instead of joy.

In this excerpt students can find numerous examples of language intended to manipulate, language loaded with emotion and imagery of the battle, language meant to belittle and distort truth. Alert readers see unfair inferences, labeling, gross generalizations, either/or orientation, and nearly every ploy the advertising folk use on us every day of our lives. Students could try to re-write these paragraphs in neutral language, and they will likely find it impossible, so much does the material depend on its trappings to convey its message.

After reading and enjoying the humor of Langston Hughes' little tale below, analysis could help students see semantics in everyday life. They would observe the contrast between the abstractness of the census taker, who fails to see the narrator as a human being, and the marvelous concreteness of Simple, a contrast that is especially ironic since we think of census takers as being concerned with facts.

Census

> 'I have had so many hardships in this life,' said Simple, 'that is a wonder I'll live until I die. I was born young, black, voteless, poor, and hungry, in a state where white folks did not even put Negroes on the census. My daddy said he were never counted in his life by the United States government. And nobody could find a birth certificate for me nowhere. It were not until I come to Harlem that one day a census taker dropped around to my house and asked me where were I born and why, also my age and if I was still living.' I said, 'Yes, I am here, in spite of all.'. . .
>
> Then I went on to tell him how my feet have helped to keep the American shoe industry going, due to the money I have spent on my feet. I have wore out seven hundred pairs of shoes, eighty-nine tennis shoes, forty-four summer sandals, and two hundred and two loafers. The socks my feet have bought could build a knitting mill. The razor blades I have used cutting away my corns could pay for a razor plant. Oh, my feet have helped to make America rich, and I am still standing on them. . .
>
> 'My mama should have named me Job instead of Jesse B. Simple. I have been

underfed, underpaid, undernourished, and everything but undertaken yet I am still here. The only thing I am afraid of now is that I will die before my time. So man, put me on your census this year, because I may not be here when the next census comes around."

The census man said, 'What do you expect to die of complaining?'

'No,' I said, 'I expect to ugly away.' At which I thought the man would laugh. Instead you know he nodded his head, and wrote it down. He were white and did not know I was making a joke. Do you reckon that man really thought I am homely?

Semantics and Composition

Being aware of how others use language purposefully is not enough; students must become responsible users themselves. In producing writing intended for audiences other than themselves, students can profit from their awareness of semantics concepts in the pre-writing and drafting stages but also during revising and editing. One important aspect of pre-writing is the student's thoughtful consideration of his/her intended audience. An understanding of semantics can help the writer make this analysis with such questions as the following:

1. How much information does my audience already have about _____?
2. What values does my audience hold?
3. What basic assumptions does my audience have about _____?
4. To what extent will my readers accept my generalizations?
5. How many concrete examples (referents) does my audience need? Will they share my referents?

Another use for semantics concepts in pre-writing, especially in writing that intends to move others to action, thought, or feeling, lies in the discovery of one's own opinion or generalization on an issue or situation. Through discovery drafting, brainstorming, and other strategies, the student can determine whether an opinion is (1) genuine and derived from personal conviction and logic and (2) supportable. How often students seem simply to take a side on an issue without regard for their own experience or the accumulated experience of others.

During writer-based revision, writers examine whether they are expressing what they really want to say and believe in. Are they over-generalizing? Are they articulating their basic assumptions? Are they depending on cliches when fresh expressions can be found? During reader-based revision, they consider the effect their words will have on their readers. In addition to considering the larger matter of organization, they look for foggy meanings (usually attributable to too many high level abstractions); they look for long-windedness (gobbledegook) and jargon; they look for convincing concrete support. They re-examine the purposes of their choice of words. Finally after re-drafting, students use semantics concepts as they edit their work, again with an eye toward audience. They tend to their verbs, especially trying to avoid the passive, which generally makes it seem as if no one

is responsible for an action. They check their style perhaps with George Orwell's tips ("Politics and the English Language," 1956) in mind:

1. Never use a metaphor, simile, or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print.
2. Never use a long word where a short one will do.
3. If it is possible to cut out a word, always cut it out.
4. Passive — never if you can use the active.
5. Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word, or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.
6. Break any of these rules sooner than say anything barbarous.

Notice Orwell's liberal use of *never*. Fortunately, his sixth tip absolves him of over-generalizing. In a startling article, Hugh Rank (1984) nobly defends the inclusion of clichés in speaking and writing by pointing out how the repetition and regularity can support both speed and clarity of communication. Further, he convincingly proposes that clichés allow for familiarity, social bonding, and personal delight.

Yes, studying semantics can help students improve their writing. With the right materials, it can lead to a desire for clarity and brevity in both writing and speaking and impatience with the written and spoken word that consciously tries to manipulate. In the larger picture, it can provide all students with effective tools for dealing with life intelligently. It can help students control language rather than be controlled by it. In exploring the practical value of studying semantics, Solveig Torvik asserts that semantics can aid in non-college-bound students' survival as consumers and voters. For college-bound students, he claims, it can help them deal with "truths" they are expected to assimilate as part of the decision-making body of our society.

The *Essentials of English* document reminds us that knowledge of semantics concepts is deemed as important today as ever. Perhaps we are already integrating semantics into our reading and writing instruction, and we simply do not call it that. Then, indeed, it may be "just a question of semantics." But perhaps we are not, and semantics will forever remain, in Postman's words, "a fugitive enterprise."

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CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

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We teach and live in the Southern milieu, so let us celebrate those features that make our lives and our students' lives unique. The literature, history, language, and culture of the South make rich material for the English language arts classroom. Articles may focus on Appalachia or other regions within the South or treat a topic within a broad Southern context. Articles may address but are not limited to the following: What writers or literature is particularly effective with young adult readers? What project(s) using local history, folklore, and/or music has been good for integrating language arts skills in your classroom? In what ways have you involved students in studying dialects typical to the area? We invite submissions of a theoretical, critical, and/or practical nature.

Deadline: February 1, 1988

The Phenomenon of Metaphor

Dale Gilmore

There is something miraculous in the creation of a metaphor. Our brain (and body, and whatever else makes up our sensibilities) connects disparate objects that contain some common reality as we try to describe and communicate. The arc of recognition that leaps between heretofore unrelated entities is the stuff of synthetic thought, the phenomena of integrated knowledge, the result of a restless drive to connect and communicate. The raw material of metaphors is the entire universe. This pervasiveness is attested to by the use of metaphor in most disciplines—science, music, and poetry. As in the study of chemistry where Van der Waal forces or hydrogen bonds are said to create strength and cohesion among the separate molecules of a solution, so metaphor creates unity among the world's many parts. What could be more relevant and interesting to students? The forces that create metaphors are active forces in their world (Wallace, 1981). The creative process can be squelched and thwarted by an insensitive educational system; but there are also ways to encourage this capacity in young minds. To assimilate the myriad phenomena and realities of the world, to quickly connect and associate distant parts is a profoundly exciting event.

The more profoundly we understand a reality in our world—whether it be the concept of the mole in chemistry, of the nature of paradox as illustrated in literature, of the characteristics of the water molecule that makes life possible on earth, or of the creation of a metaphor in our language—the more deeply and lastingly we are thrilled. Language can be seen as an awe-inspiring phenomena: John Oller maintains that it is a plausible position to believe that the organization of living things is somehow founded in the formative power of words (Oller, 1981). There are findings in biology (the neurosciences, and particularly in genetics) that support the plausibility of a deep relationship between language and the intellect. Metaphors riddle the biologist's speech, as, for example, in the common practice of referring to macromolecules of DNA and RNA as "texts" and their "alphabets." The idea that their sequences are 'decoded' for the critical communication of their message for their protein-building activity is an example of just how deep 'language' penetrates the cosmos. Indeed, it is exciting to perceive such examples as manifestations of a central phenomenon of life: the need to communicate.

That the universe serves as the raw material for our communication is an arresting notion: the elements of poetry, then, surround us. Students

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can come to know this radical truth by teachers involving them in the process of creating metaphors (Wallace, 1981). The romantic poets made animate the inanimate; they made connections between the human and natural worlds. Often, I have felt that if we could internalize the essences of the inorganic world, that we would become most wonderfully human. For example, to *become* the storm—its energy, violence, color—would be *to know* that part of life. Yeats, in much of his poetry, felt the purity of the moon—high, removed, harsh and white, perfect—and the sensuous magnetism of the mortal rose. His participation with organic and inorganic entities outside of himself quickened, enriched, informed his life. As Carl Sagan has often reminded us—we are "star stuff," and for us to feel rational and emotional effects from other forms of matter is natural: it is life communicating with life.

Robert Frost said that "unless you are at home in the metaphor, unless you've had your proper poetical education in the metaphor, you are not safe anywhere...not safe in science, you are not safe in history" (Poirier, 1977). It is inevitable that, wherever man tries to express himself, he speaks through metaphors. If students ask (and it is a healthy impulse) why we do not just say what it is rather than comparing things, ask them to describe a zebra to someone who has never seen one. "It is a horse with stripes," they will say, making a comparison (Wallace, 1981). Science is built on the concept of fiction and metaphor: it follows that the atom is a solar system; Newton said the apple was like the moon. Indeed, no one has ever seen an atom. The metaphors, the models, help us describe the unseen in terms of the seen. We can communicate, also, our most private experiences (Wallace, 1981).

We range, literally, over the wide universe to describe and express our perceptions. For example, in this excerpt from a personal attempt at a description of the iris plant's blade-like leaves, realities in physics, geology, architecture, and the natural world are brought together:

> Like a crop of green crystals,
> long and sharp-prismed,
> with angling green and definite vectors,
> the iris point a charge
> towards heaven
> as effectively as a Gothic arch —
> a pump from steaming humus to cold stars —
> simple green arrows of flame
> licking sticky delicate and limpid
> yet fierce in their assertive freshness.

In music, recourse to similes and metaphors abound. Phrases such as the "orchestral palette" borrow from another field of the fine arts; musicographers borrow from the textile manufacturing industry when they speak of "tonal fabric"; some critics even resort to hydrologic metaphor when they speak of the "upsurge" in the strings or of a certain "cascade" of notes. More profoundly, though, we commonly speak metaphorically

when we refer to pitch as either "high" or "low," when, in fact, we are dealing only with mathematical terms relative to frequencies. Yet we will have melodies to "soar" and have a "growling bass," even though we are talking only of a number of vibrations per second (*Times Higher Education Supplement*, 1981).

This wonderful capacity we have to unify disparate parts can be squelched or let atrophy. Young children, unpretentious and earnest in their drive to communicate, are often close to poetry (e.g. "make its eyes open" for "turn on the flashlight"). These ways of communicating strike through to the mark and connect because through them we are made to see the strange in the familiar object, the flashlight (Manna Lowenfels, 1979). Young children are natural poets in that they "knit the edges of their language together, revealing for an instant, the possibility of becoming their whole selves" (Walter Lowenfels, 1973). If our educational systems are sensitive to this dynamic process of our lives, they can encourage this miraculous synthetic activity. Teachers could, for example, ask in assignments what the students' feelings look like or ask them to attribute human characteristics to different flowers or rock specimens or trees, and thus encourage traffic of expression between the animate and inanimate.

The realization that the mind's creation of such bridges is miraculous—bringing together heretofore unrelated entities: between such separate 'objects' as rocks and human personality—may make the world dance before the student as never before.

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A Way Out of the Spelling Mess

Kent Gill

"Their spelling is a mess." Thus say parents who have high hopes for their children. Thus say the university professors as they read undergraduate papers. Thus say the business people evaluating the work of their clerical and management workers. And thus say also the pundits who write newspaper and magazine pieces. Those of us working in language arts classrooms sometimes agree as we struggle in a sea of red ink.

The public tends to blame the school and the teacher. The teacher may defensively suggest a lack of will on the part of the student or on the part of last year's teacher. Or the teacher may observe that the English language itself is the villain, being more difficult to spell than other languages because English does not show a regular sound-symbol relationship. However, the real villain in uncertain spelling skills may be our failure to apply knowledge about word development and spelling principles to the teaching of spelling.

Despite the commonly-held belief that English is an uncommonly-difficult language to spell and even though there has never been an academy in full charge of the English language and its development, the spelling of English words is not really chaotic and random. Rather, spelling is a relatively logical working out of sound-symbol and word-structure principles. These principles are not simple, being complicated by a marked diversity of English word origins from other languages and by the long span of historical development during uncertain linguistic times. Yet even these complications are amenable to reason and understanding. Application of a careful logic leads rather predictably to correct spellings most of the time.

The pedagogy for teaching spelling, as represented in the content of spelling texts and in the kinds of lessons presented by teachers, does not always utilize very fully or explain very well the principled nature of English spelling. Failing to develop the full orthographic system with language learners leaves many of them error prone and cynical about spelling as well. These are the students, workers, typists, and letter writers who come unfavorably to public notice.

To illustrate our failure to deal thoroughly with spelling principles, let me try to apply the principles stated in the old spelling adage,

I before E,
Except after C,

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Or when sounded like A,
As in *neighbor* or *weigh*.

When writers apply the rule to words they need to write, they succeed in spelling *field* correctly. If they really trust the rule, they manage to produce *receive*. And they will predictably write *eight* to name the number following seven. Soon, in science class, they need to differentiate *Celsius* from *Fahrenheit*. In this word, the IE does not follow C. It surely isn't pronounced with a long "A" vowel sound. So it's "I" before "E," right? Wrong! Then in history, they try writing *anceint*. The rule says "EI" if it follows a "C," right? Wrong! By this time they begin to feel *wierd*. Wrong again!

Most young people trying to learn to spell will now throw up their (or is it *thier*) hands, shrug their shoulders, and decide that it's no use. Not only do they not know at all how to handle the IE-EI situation in English spelling, but they also have learned a negative attitude toward any attempt to figure out English spelling by an application of principle. So much for that "I before E," etc. stuff, they decide, and by association, all those other spelling rules that do not work.

Does this typical experience result because the spelling of English is really a jumbled mess? Or is it because the rule falls short when it oversimplifies a spelling situation which, although complicated, is still quite orderly and understandable? Let's look further at "I before E."

In the first place, the old verse about I and E was intended to inform only about the IE/EI digraph, where the two vowels work together to produce only a single vowel sound. Hence such words as *de-ity*, *fi-ery*, *hi-eroglyphics*, *re-imburse*, and *code-ine*, where the "I" and "E" fall in separate syllables for good structural and historic reasons, were never intended to be explained by the IE-EI statement of principle. Learners can accept that situation, if their experience informs them that a spelling rule is to be intelligently, not blindly, applied.

Our students' problem with *ancient* reveals another class of words beyond the limits of the rule regarding the digraph IE-EI. Here the "I" works with the preceding "C" to create the *ch sh* sound, and the "E" all by itself becomes the unaccented vowel producing the schwa sound. So we could not expect the "after C" to apply to words like *sufficient*, *conscience*, *efficiency*, or *omniscient*. This rather considerable group has its own logic which learners can discover, appreciate, and manage—and differentiate from the IE-EI system.

Then the English language contains a group of EI words, all borrowed directly from German in modern times. All of them retain both their German spelling and vowel pronunciation, including *geiger*, *stein*, *gneiss*, *reich*, and even *gesundheit*. In passing, we might note the long "I" value of the vowel sound. In fairness, no one would require these foreign borrowings to fit our English spelling pattern. At the same time, these words are quite useful to us in English; therefore, we can be glad we have them, even in their Germanic spelling.

With these three special circumstances involving IE-EI set aside in their own systems, one syllabic, one phonological, and one historic and geographical, the old IE-EI rhyme states a broadly applicable principle that produces the accepted spelling of a significant body of English words. It states the general, most frequent case—"I" before "E"—which produces a long "E" sound in *priest*, *niece*, *grieve*, *believe*, *wield*, *hygiene*, *thief*, and many, many more words. If one were blindly gambling on the spelling of the digraph, "IE" would certainly be the best bet.

Further, the principle notifies the speller to use "EI" when one needs the long "E" sound following the consonant "C" in such words as *receive*, *deceit*, *ceiling*, *perceive*, *conceited*, *et. al.* The learner would note that the "E" following the "C" results in the "S" sound for the letter "C." The long "E" vowel sound persists.

The third application of the principle calls for an "EI" spelling when the digraph produces a long "A" sound. This group includes such common words as *freight*, *rein*, *beige*, and *reign* as well as such less likely prospects as *heinous*, *peignoir*, *inveigh*, and *seine*. But the application is quite consistent across two score or more English words, many of which are very old in the language. Those words which reveal the silent "gh" or the silent "g(n)" with the "EI" are typical of words which date from the Middle English and Old English periods. Since these words are very old, the learner might expect that they would be spelled unusually.

Then the student speller of English needs to appreciate that spelling anomalies are likely in any set, anomalies resulting from such historic influences as borrowing, changes in pronunciation, error in printing, or inaccurate analogies. So here in our "IE-EI" set are the *weird* words, which all have the EI spelling, for a variety of understandable reasons, now to be explored in some detail:

WEIRD— vowel sound variously represented through history; present EI spelling an historic accident or a printer's choice

HEIGHT— vowel represented differently at different times; current spelling probably an arbitrary decision

THEIR— based on the English pronoun, *they*, which came from the Middle English *theyr*. Changing the Y to I gives us the modern spelling. Besides, the pronunciation comes out almost a long A.

EITHER— pronunciation changed from its historic long A; spelling persisted as pronunciation changed

LEISURE— borrowed from Old French, *leisir*; in some dialects pronounced with a long A vowel sound

SEIZE— also borrowed from Old French (*seisir*); retained French spelling for vowel sound

FORFEIT— another Old French borrowing (*forfait*) where the digraph had a long A sound; spelling Anglicized while pronunciation shifted (SURFEIT and COUNTERFEIT have similar stories)

FOREIGN	borrowed from Old French *forain*, with long A sound; EIGN might have resulted from false analogy to the *-eign* common in Middle English
SOVEREIGN	borrowed from Old French *soverain*; possible false analogy to *reign*
PROTEIN	borrowed from Greek *proteios*
SEISMIC	borrowed from Greek *seismos*, meaning earthquake; spelling follows Greek root
SHEIK	borrowed from Arabic; in some dialects, pronounced with long A vowel sound
KEITH	borrowed from Gaelic (NEILL also)
SLEIGHT	borrowed from Old Norse where the word meant "sly."

Research will reveal similar stories of accident, lineage, and erroneous analogy for other anomalous "EI" spellings. If the learners can place the word in the WEIRD WORD category, they can know that its vowel digraph is spelled "EI."

So the "IE-EI" system does indeed show a set of patterns, orderly but complex, determined by a set of phonetic, structural, and historical circumstances. It does contain some anomalies, which can be understood by reference to their history. This complexity is not beyond the ken of language learners. In fact, they have a right to experience this complexity that is a part of their linguistic world, since understanding how this system works and why it works that way can make it work for them rather than against them. Oversimplification is their enemy.

The broader implication of this exploration of "I before E," of course, is that similar attention needs to be given to a whole series of potential spelling principles that might help people better control what is admittedly a complex spelling system. Each principle needs to be explored in depth with students, to discover where apparent matches do not work, how far the principle can be pushed, how anomalies might occur. These explorations need to draw upon fundamental linguistic and historical knowledge and examine the effects of natural linguistic change.

Principles thus to be explored might include syllabication; the whole rich system of derivation by use of Latin and Greek roots, prefixes, and suffixes; inflectional systems; doubling of consonants with the addition of both prefixes and suffixes; adding endings to words ending in "Y"; and silent letter patterns. It certainly needs to include the simple additive principle that creates *newsstand*, *bookkeeper*, and many other compounds. In each case, the exploration needs to define the principle precisely, limit its application appropriately, and identify exceptions (and explain them, where possible).

Then the classroom teaching of spelling, supported by comprehensive, accurate spelling texts, could emphasize a more sophisticated understanding of how the spelling of English words works by applying linguistic principles

and facts of historic change. In addition to memory, visualization, kinesthetics, mnemonic device, intuition, and guesswork, spelling would be learned through explicit principles broadly and intelligently applied.

Teachers... Write and Share Your Ideas!

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Studying Personal Names

Bernice Born

Names are an ideal vehicle for a beginning unit of an English class. Everybody has a name, and each person's own name is very precious and special to him or her. A child's name is one of the first words he or she hears and responds to. The first thing children ask a new acquaintance is, "What's your name?" The first thing adults do on meeting someone is to introduce themselves—to say their names. Journalists know that names make news; small town publishers know that the more names in the paper, the more copies they will sell; and advertisers and sales people are reminded to use a person's name often to make a good impression. We name our children, our pets, our boats, often our cars and homes, and sometimes even rename ourselves. In some cultures, names are so sacred that they are revealed only to one's closest associates, since knowledge of a person's true name is said to give power over that person (Pei, p. 253). This article describes a naming unit for use in the middle school. The unit is limited to first names since last names or family names have a history of their own, which would be suitable for another lesson. The objectives of this unit are (a) to introduce various facets of language study, (b) to convey the idea that language study is fun, (c) to enhance each child's self-image, and (d) to prepare the class for further components of language study. Since many concepts that are true about names are true about words in general in the English language, names can be a good starting point for language study. This lesson plan was designed with sixth or seventh graders in mind but could be adapted for use with youngsters in fourth through eighth grades.

To get everyone acquainted and set the stage, I would begin with a name game in which everyone repeats the name of everyone else. In this version, everyone sits in a circle if possible. The first person holds a small stuffed animal, turns to the one on his/her right and says, "I'm Mary, and this is an antelope." The next person says, "This is a WHAT?" Mary repeats, "This is an antelope."

The next person takes the "antelope," says "OH!" turns to the person on his/her right and says, "I'm John and that's Mary and this is an antelope." The class continues until everyone has had a turn.

As the game goes on, the students tend to ham up the question, "This is a WHAT?" and the general silliness lessens self-consciousness about saying one's name to the group or anxiety about trying to remember all the names.

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This activity gives everyone a chance to pronounce correctly his or her own name for the group, is an easy memory exercise, and helps the class to become acquainted more quickly.

The children should be encouraged to supply their own names if the speaker forgets, and to correct pronunciation if their names are not repeatedly correctly. The teacher might next move into a discussion using some of these questions:

- What can you tell us about your name?
- Who picked out your name for you? (Usually parents, but in some families brothers or sisters help choose.)
- Are you named for a person in your family?
- Do you have the same name as some famous person?

Students could be urged to ask their parents about their names. Did the parent just like the sound of the name? Was the child named after a family friend or other relative?

Name Poster Activity

The teacher could now suggest that since the members of the class do not yet know each other well, all of them could make posters of their names. By using the letters of their names, the students will describe themselves in these posters. The teacher as well can participate in this activity. It is designed to help the children appreciate their own names and each others' and to think positively about themselves and about their names.

Using construction paper or poster paper, children cut and paste or print their names in fancy letters down the middle of the paper. They then are asked to write a descriptive word either beginning with each letter of their names or using each letter, for example:

S-mart	S-incere
A-thletic	helpf-U-l
M-arvelous	nic-E

They can be offered dictionaries and word-finders to scan through if they cannot readily think up words to fit. They can be helped to use adjectives and understand what they are. If students happen to choose negative words, they can be encouraged to describe themselves as they would like to be. For instance, if Sara picks "stupid" as one of her words, she can be offered alternatives of "sociable," "sensitive," "super," etc. The completed posters can be displayed around the room or hung at the children's desks.

History of Names

The teacher next can introduce a section on the history of names, asking the question: Does your name have a special meaning—perhaps in another language? It would be helpful for the teacher to bring to class several name books so students could look up their names' meanings and history. The

teacher might put up a long sheet of newsprint with everyone's name written on it and next to each name, write the meanings as they are discovered. For discussion, the class might talk about

- Names with a clear English meaning: Lovey, Angel, Pearl, Sunshine, Dawn, Mistie, Rock;
- Names with a meaning in another language—Marguerite means "daisy" in French; David means "best beloved" in Hebrew.

Many names, in fact, most common names, once were ordinary words in other languages, words that described people's physical characteristics, what they wore, their personalities, what work they did or where they were from. We see this tendency today in some nicknames: Red, Shorty, Honey, Slim, Boots. Now work and place names tend to be people's last names as in John West or Bill Baker, but in former times, people had just one name.

Old English Names

Here is a conversation that might have taken place in England a few hundred years ago: If two villagers were talking about John, misunderstandings would arise if each had a different John in mind. So qualifications were added, as in imaginary bits of conversation like these:

"A horse stepped on John's foot."
"John from the hill?"
"No, John of the dale."
"John the son of William?"
"No, John the son of Robert."
"John the smith?"
"No, John the tailor."
"John the long?"
"No, John the bald."

In the rush of conversation, the little, unimportant words could drop out or be slurred over so that John from the hill became John hill, and the other persons could be John dale, John William's son, John Robert's son, John smith, John tailor, John long, and John bald [or ballard, which means "the bald one."] (Hook, p. 12).

As an activity following this discussion, the children could make up fictitious names for themselves following the above example. They could name themselves as someone's son or daughter (using the Scandinavian datter) or according to the location of their school or street or town or neighborhood or by using some personal characteristic, perhaps a sport they excel in. These could be read to the group and either displayed or kept in a notebook. As an auxiliary activity, members of the class might keep name notebooks with their names in ornate letters on the front and the various exercises inside.

Indian Names

The next question for the class would be, "Which group of people have very descriptive names that some use even today?" The answer, of course, is American Indians. What child has not heard names like Flying Eagle, Running Deer, or Daughter of the Moon? Some tribes have even used multiple names. The Mohawks, for instance, might give a child a birth name like Morning Cloud, a confirmation name like Hungry Wolf and an honor name like Scalp Raiser (Pei, p. 74). Siouan Author William Least Heat Moon says this about his name: "Call me Least Heat Moon. My father calls himself Heat Moon, my elder Brother Little Heat Moon. I, coming last, am therefore Least.... To the Siouan peoples, the Moon of Heat is seventh month, a time also known as the Blood Moon—I think because of its dusky midsummer color.... I named my truck Ghost Dancing" (Least Heat Moon, p. 4). It would be helpful for a group of students to look through some materials about Indian names and report on them to the class. Following this, as a class project, the students could make up Indian-sounding names for themselves.

Foreign Equivalents

Another interesting aspect of names is the translation of English names into their foreign equivalents. In some of these foreign names one can readily discern the English equivalents, while others are a surprise to the reader and listener.

> Unfamiliar and strange are the forms which some very common names assume in different languages. John is easily recognizable in French Jean, Spanish Juan, German Johannes, (Johnny is Hans or Hansel), even in Italian Giovanni, Russian Ivan, and Serbian Jovan; but Irish Sean and Finnish Juhana require a translation. Joseph causes no trouble in its Spanish, German and Slavic variants, Jose, Josef, and Josip; but it becomes more difficult in Italian Giuseppe and practically unrecognizable in Irish Seosmh. Stephen, a Greek name meaning "victor's wreath," becomes Etienne, Esteban, Stepan, Istvan, and Stiobhan in French, Spanish, Russian, Hungarian, and Irish, respectively. Few people would recognize the familiar Helen in the Hungarian Ilona or its diminutive Ika. (Pei, p. 75)

The accompanying activity would be to have each child look up the derivation of his or her name and to find out how to say it in a number of foreign languages. If some children in the class have a close foreign ancestry, they or their families might be a resource for this activity.

Personal Pronunciation and Spelling

As we talk about foreign variations of names, it might be appropriate to discuss the pronunciation and spelling of names. The person doing the naming has the right to decide how he or she wishes to pronounce and spell the name, a freedom not extended to most other words in the language. Jeanne may call herself [jeen] or [zhan]. Sophia can be [sofee-ah] or [sofi-ah]. Catherine can be written as Cathrine, Katherine, or Kathryn, and Cedric can appear as Sedrak. Except for the Michaels who often transpose their a's and e's accidentally, variant spellings and pronunciations are a very

personal choice, and others should spell and pronounce names the same way their owners do. If the teacher notices unusual names or variant spellings on her class roll or hears a child pronounce his or her name in an unexpected way and the child's peers show signs of non-acceptance, the teacher might wish to speak to the issue of the individuality of names during or right after the initial name game activity.

The Egyptian Cartouche

Reaching back even further into history, the teacher could introduce a very old way of writing names, the Egyptian cartouche. Egyptians used pictographs to represent people's names. Sometimes a picture stood for a certain sound, and sometimes the name of the thing pictured was part of the word as in a rebus. To imitate this kind of writing, the children could draw or cut out pictures from magazines to make cartouches of their names. Matt could draw or cut out a picture of a M-ountain, an A-pple and two T-rees to stand for his name; or he could just find a picture of a mat. These could be displayed with the students' names on the backs, and put up around the room so others could try to figure out their classmates' name signs.

Name Varieties

The class could next consider the many varieties of names. One of the first that comes to mind is the difference between girls' and boys' names. Matters for discussion could be

- What makes a name clearly masculine or clearly feminine?
- Is there a way to turn a masculine name into a feminine one?
- How about the other way around?
- Are some names suitable for either a boy or a girl?

You might note that some tribes do not have separate girls' names and boys' names (Pei, p. 74) and discuss what life would be like if that were true of our society.

Another kind of variety in names is the use of diminutives, less formal versions of names usually used by family and close friends, or perhaps just the form of the name a person wishes to be known by. The students can be asked to list possible diminutives of their own names and of others.' It might be fun to trace how some diminutives developed. Why is William called Bill, and how did Mary become Molly or Polly?

Names from another culture are interesting and varied. Can a person's ancestry or cultural heritage be guessed from his name? After listing some names that are common in other countries, the teacher could ask the students to guess a name's country of origin and to list other examples. The teacher might start with Jose, Juanita, Evita, Stash, Jean-Paul, Ahmal, Kareem, etc. Some of these names have English equivalents, but others are unique to a particular ethnic group. Black names are particularly interesting and sound quite exotic to those outside Black culture. Some, such as Shona or Ashanti, are African names, or the names of tribes. Others are unique

blended names, for example, Coretta, Corella, Lakesha, Sharonda, Raynette or Condola.

Next the class could move on to old and new names, names which are very modern-sounding, possibly some of the children's own names: Max and Chandra, or names from very old sources: Micah and Ruth. The class might discuss which names are heard more frequently now such as Jason and Jennifer, which names were common when their parents and grandparents were young, and which names appear in stories from long ago. They might even consider whether geography is a factor in the frequency of certain names. The teacher is cautioned to avoid using the word "popular" in referring to names frequently chosen since the class might interpret "popular" as a judgment of the name itself and of the person who bears it.

Making Up Names

At this point, the class would probably enjoy an exercise in making up names. They could make up a name for themselves by combining syllables or letters from both of their parents' names, or from a set of fictitious parents. As the book *Language Play* says,

> Parents sometimes blend their two names into a new name for their baby. For example, *Glenella* comes from the father's name *Glenn* and the mother's name *Ella*. From the following male and female names, or from the names of couples that you know, see if you can devise three blended names.
>
> Male names: Dee, Don, Ed, Jay, Lynd, Nick
>
> Female names: Ann, Colette, Ella, Linda, Lynn, Wynn. (Nilson, p. 97)

Making Up Names for Fictional Characters

An even more exciting naming exercise is creating names for science fiction characters. Often these names have other-wordly sounds that suggest the characters they identify such as Darth Vader and Luke Skywalker, and more currently, He-man, She-ra, Skeletor, or the Thundercats, Liono, Panthero and Cheetara. Students might wish to make up a similar list of fictional TV or movie characters and then write stories about them. The students' cast will probably include a hero and heroine, a monster or two, and assorted aliens.

Nicknames and Handles

Nicknames are a natural study of the naming process. Often they are simply diminutives of a person's given name—Benjamin is called Ben, and Nicholas is Nick, but sometimes nicknames have no resemblance at all to the given name, and relate more to Old English descriptive names. The teacher might ask the class if any have special nicknames or how they feel about some nicknames people attach to them? An exercise might be to make up a list of various nicknames. The students could be directed to put pluses next to ones they like and minuses next to ones they would not like to be called. Everyone could make up a nickname he/she would

like to be called.

CB names are an interesting part of the culture. The discussion might include asking who uses them and why? How did they get started? What are CB names called? What are some other CB terms? Students could then make up CB handles for themselves and add them to their notebooks.

Naming Pets

A fitting finale to a unit on names would be the opportunity for the children to do some naming of their own. And what do children often get to name? Their pets, both live and toy. For this exercise, the teacher could bring in many pictures of animals allowing each child to pick one out and think about some names for it. Would the children choose historical names? Old-fashioned names? Made-up names perhaps using some of the letters of their own names? A name that sounds like an animal sound such as Bowser or Yapley? Urge them to tell how they decided on the particular names for their pets. Each child could make a poster of his/her picture pet with its new name.

Some real pets have long, fancy names and then a short name used by the family. Perhaps someone could find out how kennel owners pick names for their animals. Do animals other than domestic pets have names? What are some suitable names for animals? Can you tell anything about the animal from its name?

A Comment to the Teacher

In preparing this material, I read a book called *The Name Game*, by Christopher P. Anderson. His thesis, which I found disturbing, is that "a name can make you a winner or a loser, that one's health, longevity, business and personal success are determined by one's name—and what you do about it." As to what to do about it, he generally recommends changing it, an option not usually open to a child, and gives long lists of names judged acceptable, or winner's names, and names judged unacceptable, or loser's names. To bolster his arguments, he cites statistics such as these:

> Criminal misdeeds are four times as likely among those with bizarre names. In a Harvard study, 4% of those with eccentric names accounted for 15% of those treated for psychoneurotic illnesses, and 17% of those who flunked. (Anderson, p. 105)

Various newspaper and magazine articles have made similar points. My reaction is that I do not agree totally with these judgments—a name not accepted in one school or area of the country may be well received in another. However, I feel the information Anderson offers gives cause for concern, and his warning is one teachers would do well to keep in mind:

> Disturbingly, name prejudice, subconscious or otherwise, is particularly prevalent among those adults who exert the most influence on a child's behavioral development outside the home-teachers. In an experiment involving 80 elementary school-teachers in San Diego, Harari, now a full professor of psychology at San Diego State College, and McDavid, a Georgia State psychologist, asked the teachers to grade compositions by eight fifth- and sixth-graders on "What I Did All Day Last Sunday." All the

papers were judged to be of about the same quality before they were submitted to the teachers. The researchers merely removed the students' real names and substituted four popular ones—Michael, David, Lisa and Karen—and four unpopular ones—Elmer, Huber, Adelle and Bertha.

The results were alarming. Michael and David came out a full grade higher than Elmer and Hubert. Karen and Lisa did a grade-and-a-half better than Bertha. Concluded Harari: "Teachers know by previous experience that students with unusual names haven't been their best students. So when a Sanford or an Elmer or a Rufus comes along, they don't demand much from him. If a teacher has a low expectation of a student, she is likely to get less out of him. A self-fulfilling prophecy."

Why do teachers appear to attach academic significance to a student's name? The teachers in the Harari-McDavid study appeared to pick up their prejudice from the students themselves. The bias that was so flagrantly evident when seasoned teachers graded the essays was less extreme when the papers were evaluated by teacher trainees.

Prejudice of this sort among teachers can make a lasting impression. A recent study by S. Gray Garwood of Tulane compared desirably named 11-year-olds (Craig, Gregory, Jeffrey, James, John, Jonathan, Patrick and Richard) with boys named Bernard, Curtis, Darrell, Donald, Gerald, Horace, Maurice, Jerome, Roderick, and Samuel. The results showed that children with names teachers liked scored higher on tests and were better adjusted. (Anderson, pp. 107-108)

In view of these attitudes, I feel it is necessary for teachers to realize that name prejudices do exist in order to be on guard against them. It is my hope that by going through the activities and discussions of this unit the teacher will not only introduce the students to interesting concepts in the study of the English language, but also reinforce a positive view of each child and of his or her name.

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Vocabulary Study as Performance

Elizabeth Miller

Vocabulary study is an important part of language arts classes on every level, and I can recall very well how vocabulary words were taught to me during my middle and high school years. A vocabulary list was handed to us on Monday with a test assigned for Friday. The instructions never varied: define. On Friday we regurgitated definitions we did not understand; then forgot everything as soon as we handed in our tests. As a future educator, I am of the unswerving opinion that vocabulary study should serve a more useful purpose to the student than the situation I have just described. Every teacher has a responsibility to provide students with vocabulary experience to which they can effectively relate. Students must have an opportunity to tie the meanings of vocabulary words to their own experience, and teachers need to create these opportunities.

As a student aide in the classroom of Ms. Carolyn Hinson, an eighth grade teacher at Dublin Middle School in Pulaski County, I observed a creative and dramatical approach that gave students the opportunity either to observe or to participate in performances that provided them with a better way to learn their list of twenty-five to thirty words. The word generally had the same prefix, such as "trans-," "ex-," or "re-." Prior to the vocabulary skits, students were given a copy of the words and instructions to give their own meanings for some words, circle prefixes, and write sentences with context clues for others. Consequently, the vocabulary performance that I am about to describe came after students had familiarized themselves with the words. Not every word was performed, but only the ones that might have posed problems to the class.

As a teacher, you must be the main performer, but with a little prompting and discussion beforehand, the students make fine and enthusiastic actors and actresses. In case of student giggles or stage fright, you should be ready to improvise, but stepping in to replace a student is not usually necessary.

The following example demonstrates how well this approach works. I was in charge of this particular skit intended to clarify the meaning of the word *recurrent*. I especially wanted to emphasize that "recurrent" means over and over again. After conferring with my two volunteers, we began. The boys stretched out on the floor and feigned sleep. I pulled the shades and turned out the lights to represent night. I had instructed the boys

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to have nightmares, which they proceeded to do with true dramatic flair. One young man began to holler that a snake was eating his toes, while the other mumbled something about a monster chasing him. I switched on the lights and pretended to wake them up. I reassured them that it was only a dream and they should go back to sleep. We repeated this scenario twice more to emphasize the over and over again nature of the word. Then I announced that the boys had experienced *recurrent* nightmares because they had the same bad dreams over and over again. Each student then used recurrent in a sentence with a context clue. When recurrent appeared on Friday's test, the students could recall the skit and give a sentence using the word in context.

The merits of acting out vocabulary words are numerous. In addition to providing a break from classroom routine and allowing students to demonstrate their creativity, the skits help to hone valuable oral and listening skills. Students need experience speaking and performing before an audience, and vocabulary performance functions as a non-threatening theater for their efforts. Listening skills are also improved as students listen carefully to the skits to pick up relevant context clues that reveal word meanings. The skits also serve to move words from students' passive vocabulary to their active vocabulary. They need to understand and learn these words well enough to use them every day instead of just well enough to pass a test. I have heard students say, "I never heard that word before, and now I hear it all the time." The word was always around; but, by providing students with a chance to connect words with their own experience, the skit moved the word into their active vocabulary, and now they are aware of it.

This activity can be adapted to any level, although younger students might need more supervision than older ones. Older students could form groups and create skits for their classmates with a minimum of teacher intervention.

Using vocabulary as performance, in addition to the vocabulary exercises I mentioned earlier, provides an effective coupling of practice and application. The old routine of defining without applying needs to be replaced. Acting out vocabulary words is a marvelous alternative that any enthusiastic teacher can easily implement. The reward of students comprehending and using those vocabulary words long after the test is past is a reward well worth working to achieve.

Teaching the History of English

Ann Reddy

A few months ago, in September, a student walked into my classroom and announced as she emphatically plopped her books on a desk that she hated English. Then she caught my eye and amended her statement, by saying, "Well, I hate English class." Intuitively this girl knew that she did not hate her mother tongue but the so called study of it in the classroom. After her comment, I began and have continued to think about why students feel as they do about language study. How can we motivate students to want to study the language, which along with literature and writing, is our duty to teach?

I could list reasons why students hate language study; but, frankly, I don't want to discuss the fact that they don't like identifying parts of speech or diagramming sentences; or that they don't like searching for word after word in the dictionary to find that they truly don't know what a given word means; or that they don't like having their speech corrected for using "ain't" or double negatives; or that they don't like having every misspelled word circled in near neon red pen. No, I won't discuss these negative aspects of teaching English.

Instead, I'd like to propose a subject rich in content that, I believe, will help make students love English and English class: the history of the English language. There are a number of reasons that make such a study beneficial.

Language is Human

First of all language is what characterizes humans as such. We think in language, whether that language is in words or whether it is pictorial. "To know the origin of words is to know how [people] think, how they have fashioned their civilization. Word history traces the path of human fellowship, the bridges from mind to mind, from nation to nation" (Shipley, p. vii). Knowing the history of language is as important as knowing the history of anything. Edwin Hoey, listing reasons for teaching the history of English, writes that "students should know something about the heritage of their language just as they should know something about the heritage of their nation and its people" (p. 1041).

Grammar Has History

Secondly, students will have a better feeling toward the idea of standard usage if they know how random our rules really are. It never made a bit of sense to me when my mother told me not to say "ain't." Why shouldn't

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I when it was a completely useful word? Her correcting my speech did not change my behavior. Years later I learned the history of the word and was glad that I had used it. I could, however, appreciate the idea that some people who are sticky with rules must judge people by the way they speak. Students can appreciate how, when the conquerors who invaded England were too impatient to learn the inflections of Old English words, instead they used the roots to convey meaning. Their use of English probably sounded much the same as a foreigner learning English does today: "I go to store yesterday." Eventually, most of the inflections were completely lost to both conqueror and native-English speaker (Hook, p. 83). Students might appreciate, too, the possessive apostrophe more if they knew that it originated because of a fluke. To paraphrase Hook, the possessive case of Middle English nouns ended in "-es" and was often pronounced "HIS." Eventually, the word "his" became a common indicator of possession. Shakespeare uses it in the following examples "his father his house," and "as red as Mars his heart." Eventually the apostrophe was used to replace the "hi" in "his" (Hook, p. 160).

Then, too, students can recognize the effect that the Eighteenth Century grammarians had on the study of language when they applied the usage of Latin to the usage of English. For example, John Dryden (states Hook) noted "that a Latin infinitive such as *amare* 'to love,' being a single word, is never divided, and argued that in English a split infinitive like 'to really love' must be bad because it does not conform to Latin grammar" (Hook, p. 204). English is filled with these quirks that students can appreciate if they know the historical context. Think of all the frustrations that can be avoided with a laugh.

Spelling Is Arbitrary

Thirdly, students have a context for spelling when they study the history of the language. Before Caxton brought the printing press to England, few people even tried to spell consistently. Printing had a standardizing effect on spelling. Readers noticed when words were spelled the same way and likewise began to notice the variations in spelling. Thus, style guides were adopted by printers, a practice still in use today by publishing houses. Arguments against phonetic spelling can be understood when a student realizes how much pronunciation and vocabulary has and will change. Caxton himself recognizes this in the following passage from his preface to *Eneydos*: "Certaynly it is harde to playse every man by cause of dyversite & chaunge of langage" (Hook, p. 143).

Language and Society Interact

A fourth reason for studying the history of the language is so the students realize that language changes and is a reflection of societal changes. Students need to realize that, when the Normans conquered in 1066, they brought with them a whole slew of words that reflected their way of life. English was enriched with military and governmental words such as ***sergeant***,

ambassador, and *sovereign*; church words such as *baptism*, *sacrifice* and *bishop*; words in arts and sciences such as *poet*, *beauty*, *anatomy*; and social and domestic words such as *attire*, *plate* and *veal* (Hook, pp. 116-119). Such courtly ideas reflect the culture of medieval England as much as modern computer talk reflects current culture. "History can help show students how language and society interact" (Hoey, p. 1042).

An examination of the history of the language shows how language changes. Would you be offended if I called you a *hussy*? Well, you wouldn't be if this were the year 900 A.D. (Unless, of course you find the idea of being a *housewife* offensive.) Both *hussy* and *housewife* were at one point the same word. Eventually, a pejorative sense of the term *hussy* was given to some housewives of low reputation. Not all were deserving of such, so the word *housewife* was kept (Hook, p. 89). Similarly, a lewd man used to be a layman in the church, and heathens were simply people who had not been converted because they lived out on the heath.

Knowledge of History Can Change Attitudes

An understanding of the history of the language can foster an attitudinal change. Students can be very cruel toward people who have different dialects; but, when speech patterns are traced historically, students see the reasons why people speak differently.

An example of a study of one particular dialect is a short unit I teach on Appalachian speech. Teaching in southwest Virginia, I live in an area where students hear their grandparents say *winder* for *window* and *tater* for *potato* and preface verbs with "a" as in *a-goin'* and *a-fussin'*. Students are surprised to learn that many pronunciations and structures which they assumed were ignorant are, in fact, old forms of English. The Appalachian Mountain people retain forms spoken by the Scotch-Irish, whose history can be traced to 55 B. C. These Celtic people, because of their unique history, lived in isolation in Scotland and then again in Ireland so that the English they brought to America was a form already outdated in England by 300 years.

By studying the history of dialects, then, students realize that Standard English is not the only English. Dialects are rich with the history of those who speak them; and, when students recognize this history, they can become tolerant of differences and even value these differences.

Study of Language History Is Interesting

Finally, the study of the language is fascinating. If none of the other reasons I have cited previously have convinced you of its value in the English classroom, I believe this reason alone is enough: students find it interesting. If teachers are knowledgeable in the subject, they can interject, formally (with unit plans) or informally (with trivial word etymologies), information that will spark student interest. A few small details I have presented in my classroom have made students initiate questions about the history of the language. "Where does the word *interlude* come from? Why do we

spell the word *know* that way?" Language study becomes a significant tool for inspiring students to think.

Once teachers recognize the value of teaching the history of the language, the levels at which information can be introduced becomes important. Presentation of the objectives needs to be systematic, with general concepts introduced at primary and elementary levels and more specific material studied at middle and high school levels. For example, first graders would not understand the detailed history of the letter "A" that a teacher might present to middle schoolers. (In 1000 B. C. the Phoenicians and others who lived around the Mediterranean began to use the symbol ∢. That gave it the name "aleph," meaning ox from the oxbow, and used it to represent a different sound than the vowel "a." After 900 B. C., the Greeks borrowed the sign in reversed form and changed the name to "alpha" making the sign stand for the vowel sound "a." First graders, however, could be introduced to the concept that the formation of our letters has changed. What was once a pictorial representation of the ox is now the letter A. Likewise, children have to understand the concept of different languages before they can understand that the English Language has not always been the same as it is today. The following table provides suggested objectives for different grade levels:

General Objectives for Teaching the History of English

Primary Grades (K-3)

The student will

- recognize that language and letters come from a source,
- understand that people speak different languages,
- recognize that although languages are different, there are similarities among languages.

Upper Elementary (4-5)

The student will

- become aware that different dialects of some languages exist (emphasis on local dialects),
- realize that some languages are more closely related than others,
- recognize that events in history influence the development of English,
- define language.

Middle (6-8)

The student will

- recognize that language changes,
- understand the major events in history that influenced the history of language,
- examine various dialects in English and value the differences,
- examine regional differences in speech within the United States.

High School (9-12)

The students will

- analyze the historical events and their relation to changes in language, recognizing that changes in English language were gradual,
- compare structural changes in English,
- compare dialects of English tracing the history of different dialects of English,
- value changes in the language,
- define language.

Fitting the Language History Into the Overall Curriculum

I arrived at the above general objectives by looking at Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) social studies and languages arts objectives for various grade levels and then determining what objectives for teaching the history of the language fit the framework already suggested by the SOL's. In the middle school where I teach, for example, a sixth-grade teacher introduces language history concepts during her class's study of the Middle Ages. She feels that integrating these two areas of study answers some of the questions students have raised. Students wonder, for example, why English has so many "outlaws" in spelling and structure as well as the duplication of words for the same concept: swine, pig, pork. "The answers make so much sense when we study the infusion of Norman French (after 1066) with the Anglo-Saxon language," she says.

Following is a list of more specific objectives that includes relevant social studies and language arts SOL objectives in addition to language history objectives. The teacher can, therefore, correlate the study of language history with other parts of the curriculum.

Grade Level Objectives

K: The students will

- listen to poetry, stories, and legends thus extending their cultural awareness and fostering in them an appreciation of and enjoyment of literature in English history.

Grade 1: The student will

- form legible manuscript letters, words, and numerals,
- examine the history of the alphabet,
- discover the need for the ability to express oneself using symbols such as the alphabet,
- become aware (through stories and poems) of the experiences, emotions, and ideas of other persons,
- compare and contrast family lifestyles of different cultures,
- recognize that language and letters come from a source.

Grade 2: The student will

- read and spell words by acquiring a basic knowledge of possible spellings of English words and sounds,
- form manuscript letters legibly,
- identify the different ways people communicate,
- understand that people speak different languages.

Grade 3: The student will

- participate in storytelling and choral reading with some knowledge of the history of the tradition,
- write in cursive style with emphasis on the history of the style,
- compare customs, habits, and dialects of different ethnic groups in the U.S. and groups in other parts of the world,
- recognize that, although languages are different, there are similarities.

Grade 4: The student will

- vary written and oral communication according to purpose and audience (emphasis is on when and why to use standard usage),
- use appropriate irregular form of verbs through discussion of strong verbs,
- determine the function of words in sentences and discuss the history of English syntax,
- discuss the reasons why the English settled in the Virginia colonies and its impact on spreading the language,
- identify and locate various cultural groups that have contributed to Virginia's heritage and the influence these groups had on the language,
- become aware that different dialects of the same language exist,
- realize that some languages are related more closely than others.

Grade 5: The student will

- compare and contrast literary forms such as legends, folk tales, fables, tall tales and myths,
- use metaphors and similes effectively with emphasis on language play
- use verb forms to express time,
- identify the major groups that immigrated to the U. S., where they settled and their influence on the language,
- recognize that events in history influenced the development of the English language.

Grade 6: The student will

- apply in writings major conventions in spelling,
- identify and describe English culture and how it affected world history,
- identify major changes in English society and determine the causes and effects of these changes (revolutions, technology and colonization),
- cite examples of the interdependence within cultures and in the world community,
- identify and describe important periods and events in world history and their effect on the English language,
- recognize that language changes.

Grade 7: The student will

- enlarge his/her speaking, reading and listening vocabularies through discovering word etymologies,
- recognize the function of words in sentences with some understanding of the history of English syntax,
- examine various dialects of English and value the differences.

Grade 8: The student will

- use appropriate pronouns and antecedents and discuss how little they have changed through history,
- enlarge his/her vocabulary by using context clues and word etymologies,
- demonstrate basic understanding of American legal, political, and economic terms and their historical roots,
- recognize the values, traditions and attitudes of various cultural/ethnic groups in America with emphasis on different dialects,
- examine regional differences of speech within the U. S.

Grade 9: The student will

- differentiate between connotative and denotative meanings of words in context,
- use punctuation to clarify meaning and discuss the historical context of punctuation,
- use language appropriate to the situation,
- examine English culture including beliefs, religions, values, traditions and institutions,
- use critical thinking skills to examine contemporary issues and events such as further spread of English and project possible consequences,
- examine the way the printing press and other technological advancements have altered the course of history,

- value changes in the language.

Grade 10: The student will

- distinguish between literal and figurative language,
- discuss use of common coordinating conjunctive adverbs and the way they have evolved,
- describe the socialization process in English cultures,
- analyze the development and effects of various religious/moral beliefs in English cultures,
- analyze historical events and their relation to changes in the language, recognizing that the changes in the English language were gradual,
- examine the current issue of the spread of English as a second language in terms of its historical development,
- compare the structural changes in English

Grade 11: The student will

- gain an insight into the culture and history of a people through the study of literature,
- identify and analyze the impact of contributions made by ethnic and other groups in the development of American English,
- arrange events and historical developments of English in chronological order,
- compare dialects of English, tracing the history of varieties of English.

Grade 12: The student will

- demonstrate skills of oral persuasion,
- increase his/her understanding of the range and depth of human experience through the study of literature,
- recognize the changing nature of language,
- define language.

With the introduction of English language history into the curriculum the teacher provides students with a way of looking at language that is both interesting and informative. Wouldn't it be refreshing to hear students ask, "Why do people in Massachusetts leave out *r* 's when they talk?" "What does *lunatic* have to do with the moon?" or "Do all languages use the same alphabet?"

Activities

Once a teacher decides to teach the history of the language, there are a number of books that serve as valuable resource materials. Two books that I particularly recommend provide both (1) a source for information and a theoretical base and (2) a source for activities to use in the classroom. The first is J. N. Hook's work *History of the English Language*, which presents its subject in mostly chronological order. Although I hate people who "borrow" my own books on a permanent basis, I've been tempted to do so with this one because it is not only useful but interesting. Each chapter offers a thorough account of given periods and includes the specific historical factors as well as word etymologies from that period and a list of activities that can be adapted for use in most any grade level. For example, in the chapter on the alphabet, the author suggests having students tell a simple story through pictographs (p. 53). In the chapter on Early Modern English, the author suggests having students guess the origins of common names such as Brown, Moore or Williams (179-180). Another example of an activity suggests having students write a couple of sentences on any subject then check the dictionary for the origin of the words. Students will be struck with the importance of borrowed words into English (p. 188).

The second book I recommend is John Nist's book *A Structural History of English*, which represents the topic with more emphasis on analyzing the linguistics of the language. Noting the changes in phonology, morphology, syntax and style, this book also offers at the end of each chapter numerous questions for research and discussion. Although these questions, in the form presented, are more suitable for college-level students and teachers, this could be useful as a source for ideas for teacher planned activities at any level. One such question suggests the class research the use of /h/ sound before /w/ in present day English. Historically, an /h/ was sounded if the word began with *wh* (as in where). Members of the class could record family members' and friends' pronunciation of such words as *what*, *where*, and *why* (p. 138). Another question suggests letting members of the class give reports on contemporary American slang among teenagers, athletes or soldiers (p. 375).

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Test For Teachers

Sally E. Burkhardt

Most of you probably remember fondly your high school days in English class when you were required to classify sentences according to four different types—simple, compound, complex, or compound-complex. If you are an English teacher, you perhaps have just recently directed your students in the same type of activity. There's no doubt, therefore, that most of you will enjoy analyzing according to sentence type the following brain tickling sentence written by Ernest Hemingway in his short story, "Big Two-Hearted River:"

> Holding the rod far out toward the uprooted trees and sloshing backward in the current, Nick worked the plunging trout out of the weeds into the open river.

For those few who might have forgotten how to classify an English sentence, the following definitions from Warriner's *English Grammar and Composition* are provided:

1. A simple sentence has one main clause and no subordinate clauses.
2. A compound sentence has two or more main clauses but no subordinate clauses.
3. A complex sentence has one main clause and one or more subordinate clauses.
4. A compound-complex sentence contains two or more main clauses and one or more subordinate clauses.

While giving some kind of answer is the most important part of taking this test, extra credit will be given to anyone who can also support his answer by telling exactly what structures the sentence contains. After making your decision, turn to "Analysis" on page 112.

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Language in Context: the Child, the Critic, and the Language of Literature

Barbara A. Lehman

The traditional approach to literary criticism of children's books has followed the model of literary criticism for adult literature: focus on literary elements of the work alone. Yet in the field of children's literature, that singular approach can produce serious inconsistencies, resulting in books that "enrapture the critics and leave children cold" (Kimmel, 1982, p. 38). The term "children's literature" itself requires a fusion between literary merit and child appeal, for literature cannot be *children's* unless they claim it as theirs. Thus, child-centered literary criticism has evolved as a method to examine children's books on the basis of literary standards combined with a developmental understanding of the child reader (see Brett and Huck, 1982).

I have chosen two books as exemplars for child-centered critical analysis in this article. (For further treatment of this topic, see Lehman, 1986). One novel, *The Sign of the Beaver*, reflects both child appeal and literary distinction, for it was both a "Children's Choices" selection (the bibliography published annually in *The Reading Teacher*) and a Newbery honor book. The other book, *The Westing Game*, a recipient of both the Newbery medal and the Boston Globe Horn Book fiction award, was not a "Children's Choices" selection.

Matt's achievement of recognition for accomplishing a man's job develops the primary theme of *The Sign of the Beaver*: "growing up." Specifically, for this twelve-year-old boy in Eighteenth Century Maine, it means responsibility for guarding a newly built log house alone and learning to survive in the wilderness in what amounts to a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood. He evolves from a boy who follows, while sometimes resenting, his father's advice to be a young man capable of surviving alone. The process is far from smooth. He quickly is reduced to utter dependence on an old Indian man and his scornful grandson, Attean. With Attean, Matt's rite of passage takes on an added dimension. Will he be capable enough to earn the Indian's friendship?

A second theme is portrayed through the relationships in the story. Matt

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discovers how vital these are, not only for combating loneliness and fear in the isolated wilderness, but also for survival and passing his test of manhood. Without the aid of Attean and his grandfather, Matt would have been helpless. Matt, in turn, though he at first resents Attean's scorn, comes to a growing understanding of the Indian culture and finds his own Robinson Crusoe view of the white man's superiority fundamentally changed.

A third theme, "child as hero," is established through the use of a central child character. The author conveys the behavior, interest, and needs of a typical twelve-year-old boy. In addition, adults mostly are absent, especially Matt's parents. He is left on his own, with only the aid of Attean, to solve his problems by acquiring the wilderness and domestic know-how that enables him to triumph in his rite of passage. In the end, Matt is rewarded with his father's words, " 'You've done a grown man's job, son. . . I'm right proud of you" ' (p. 133).

Symbols echo the themes in this novel: an inversion of the Robinson Crusoe story mirrors the relationship between Matt and Attean, and Attean's search for his manitou, or spirit, matches Matt's rite of passage. Figurative language is appropriate to the historical period, such as: "The sky was the color of his mother's pewter plate" (p. 127). Verbs are strong and vividly portray action, while details supply clear, concrete images, most notably in description of the Indian village: "cone-shaped wigwams," "rosy curls of steam," "their painted faces ghastly in the flickering light" (p. 78). Short, often incomplete sentences abound and contribute to the fairly rapid pace of the plot, which is set on the very first page. Matt's misadventures sometimes are funny, but the story does not need humor to carry it along. Rather, the tone is suspenseful, and it concludes optimistically.

Within the framework of a chronological plot, this novel is structured to focus first on Matt's rite of passage as survival in isolation. It then shifts to highlight the friendship with Attean, while continuing to build the survival theme. Finally, Attean leaves, and Matt must once again confront his adequacy in living alone, this time with winter approaching. The entire story is centered symmetrically between the events of Matt's father leaving and his family returning, which completes the resolution.

The Westing Game is subtitled rightly, "a puzzle mystery," for its primary theme is "illusion versus reality." Sam Westing, an immigrant who has become a millionaire industrialist, sets up the mystery like a chess game. He builds an apartment house, called Sunset Towers, makes sure that the chosen players move into it, and then (though presumably having died) invites them all, as heirs, to a reading of his will. The will explains the purpose of the game: to discover who among the sixteen heirs has taken Westing's life. The one (or ones) who wins the game will inherit the money. The players are grouped into eight pairs, and each pair receives a different set of clues. The will also contains a clue for everyone: "It is not what you have, it's what you don't have that counts" (p. 36). So the game begins—but wait! That is not really the game at all! The will contains another

clue to the real puzzle: "Some are not who they say they are, and some are not who they seem to be" (p. 39). Thus, if the reader thinks he or she has solved the first mystery, that person will be shocked to discover it is an illusion, while the central mystery remains unsolved. This is really a puzzle about hidden identities, for, as the game reveals, each player has a secret and tries to hide insecurities and fears with foibles and pretensions.

Relationships formed by pairs of players are the key to solving the overt mystery. They all must overcome their initial suspicions in pooling, finally, their clues to discover the "answer." Moreover, these relationships help the partners to drop their pretensions with each other and to recognize their own true identities and their real goals in life. But who are Barney *North*up, Sandy Mc*South*ers, and Sam *West*ing? They are three of the four "winds" of Windy Windkloppel's (alias Sam Westing) personality. And who is the fourth? Only Turtle Wexler discovers that answer.

Turtle, the "child as hero," is the one character with more than one dimension. She kicks people in the shin who dare to touch her precious braid, but she also is a stock market whiz, and she yearns to be loved. Turtle and three other youthful characters are the only ones without hidden personalities because, unlike the adults, they still are in the process of discovering their identities.

The author cunningly builds the theme of "illusion versus reality" through every nuance of style. The language (especially the use of alliteration and hyphenated adjectives) and the intentional overwriting help to conceal the real mystery behind melodrama. The players are so unnerved by the apparent murder of Sam Westing and their suspicions of each other that every action is overdramatized and floridly described. The stereotyped characterizations add humor and also contribute to the theme that people are not who they first appear to be. In addition, word play lends humor and creates double-takes.

Symbols are used to both reveal and conceal. The name of the apartment building itself is symbolically deceiving and sets the main theme on the first page. The tenants of Sunset Towers are an ethnic microcosm of America, and Sam Westing is their "Uncle Sam." Westing also is a master chess player, and his technique in chess provides hints about his strategy in the Westing game. While this book is laden with clues, most of them turn out to be illusions. In fact, like watching the movie, "The Sting," readers who think they have solved the game's puzzle will find that the "joke" is on them, as well. In the end, the reader also is a participant in the Westing game.

The pace of the narrative is almost breathtakingly rapid. The use of exclamations, parenthetical asides, and short, incomplete sentences also enhances the melodramatic, slapstick style. The point of view is both omniscient and detached. It creates a sense of ironic distance, though the reader identifies more with Turtle than any of the other characters. The overall tone, then, is clever and very ironic. The results are upbeat: everything ends happily for everyone.

The story is tightly structured, with smooth transitions between chapters. The resolution is complete, but the title of the last chapter, "The End?" and the fact that Turtle inherits both Westing's money and position in the Westing Paper Products company and sits down to play a game of chess with her niece makes the reader wonder. Is that the last of the Westing game or could the cycle be repeated?

Here are two books written for children, both of which have received critical acclaim from adults, but only *The Sign of the Beaver* was included as a "Children's Choices" selection. What are the differences between these books? Do these differences provide any clues to child appeal?

First, of course, there are some thematic differences between the books. The key theme in *The Sign of the Beaver* is "growing up," an important one in the lives of young readers. "Illusion versus reality" is nonexistent. On the other hand, in *The Westing Game*, "illusion versus reality" is the primary theme, while "growing up" is minor. In both books, a child is the protagonist, and relationships help the characters to resolve problems and attain goals.

However, the differences between these books are more striking for style than substance. In the first place, style is more important in *The Westing Game* than in *The Sign of the Beaver*. In fact, one could almost say that for *The Westing Game* style *is* substance. These books are both rapidly paced; they both contain symbolism; and they employ similar sentence structures. Yet, the unpredictability, the intentional overwriting, the stereotyped characterizations, and the omniscient, detached point of view all contribute to the ironic tone of *The Westing Game* and to the feeling that everyone (including the reader) is fair game to be "stung." Sloan (1975) has suggested that irony belongs to the realm of "experience" and disillusionment, which implies its inappropriateness for childhood, a time of "innocence" and hope. One young reader I interviewed, who was very enthusiastic about this book, said, "It was really well-planned. It makes you think. I was always trying to figure it out." But another young reader did not like the book, because there are "too many things going on... so many people. I don't like to read a book and act like it's a game and figure out the right solution." For children who have the cognitive ability to disengage themselves from the narrative, who can step back and realize what is happening, *The Westing Game* may be great fun. But for many children who are not developmentally ready to read with such detachment, reading this book can be a frustrating experience.

In contrast, *The Sign of the Beaver* creates a strong, sympathetic identification with the protagonist through the third person, engaged point of view, which offers the thoughts and feelings of the central child character. (One young reader I interviewed said, "Matt seems like somebody I would know.") The reader also gains a feeling of being *included* in understanding where the story is headed (by providing prediction devices such as foreshadowing and lead sentences for chapters that preview the action). Predictability allows the child reader to bring and to create expectations

about the narrative. When these predictions are fulfilled, the reader may feel control over the progression of the story, a state that is both comforting and reassuring. For the child reader, whose experience is less than an adult's and to whom immediate events and the world beyond often may seem out of his or her control, some measure of predictability (without sacrificing suspense) in the books that are read may be very important.

The implication for teachers is that either of these books may be appropriate *for the right children*. The important thing is to consider not only the comments of adult critics but the voices of children, as well.

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Sensitivity to Language

M. Jerry Weiss

Recently I heard a teacher describing her experiences in a visit to an inner city elementary school. While in a first grade class, she asked the students to tell her the second line to this nursery rhyme: "Jack and Jill."

"The class looked at me as if I were from Mars," said the visiting teacher. "They had no idea of this poem or most of the familiar fairy tales that my generation had heard when we were their age."

This story has caused me to be very wary of assuming that today's children have the same literary experiential background that my own children have had. Many children, not just inner city young people, have not been read to very much and do not have lots of books in their homes. For example, as I visit schools, I find that primary children enjoy going to the public library but rarely do, in fact, go because their parents have to take them since the children need some means of transportation to get there.

It seems to me that English teachers have, therefore, an especially great responsibility in the 1980's. We must work to help students overcome the results of their linguistical deprivation. In order to help young people (and I use this term to carry through young adults) to be sensitive to the nature and values of language, I have devised a series of activities to stimulate learning and thinking through involvement. This article describes several of those activities designed to stimulate motivation and involvement. One will note that the emphasis is not on right or wrong answers; language growth takes place through wanting to use words and to find ways to communicate one's thoughts through written or oral expression.

The Values of Words

Have the students copy the following eight words on a piece of paper:

education	courage
family	wealth
health	love
freedom	religion.

Without any discussion at all, no explanation of terms or examples, each student is to rank order the list of words according to the importance of each term as he/she sees it. The word that is marked #1 is the most important; the word that is #8 is the least important. The students do

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not have to explain the reasons for their ordering of words as they did.

After each student has completed this assignment, divide the students into groups of three or four to develop a consensus and formulate a group ranking for the words. Allow fifteen or twenty minutes for this activity. The students may talk and use any discussion or argumentation to help in reaching such a consensus.

In this process students begin to explain what they think the words mean and how these words symbolize ideas, memories, values, experiences which cause them to rank them accordingly. Such an exchange of ideas is helpful in stimulating an understanding of the complex nature of language. As students share experiences, they begin to see that a key word, such as one listed above, can trigger a variety of knowledge and ideas that can be used for speaking and writing activities.

The final activity is to have each student write a summary of the experiences that took place that led to the formulation of a group list. In explaining the conclusion, ask each student to determine whether his/her original list or the group list is a better rank order for these words and to explain the reason(s) for the choice.

In Praise of Quotes

At a later date, I take some of the terms listed above and show them used in various quotations. I ask the students to examine the quotations and to express what they think these writers/speakers meant by the quotation being presented. Here are some examples:

"Freedom consists in being able to do anything that does not hurt anyone else." (Matthias Claudius)

"It is my certain conviction that no man loses his freedom except through his own weakness." (Gandhi)

"The things taught in colleges and schools are not an education, but the means of education." (Ralph Waldo Emerson)

"Education consists mainly in what we have unlearned." (Mark Twain)

"Don't try to marry an entire family or it may work out that way." (George Ade)

"The family is a good institution because it is uncongenial." (G. K. Chesterton)

"A family is a unit composed not only of children but of men, women, an occasional animal, and the common cold." (Ogden Nash)

"Wealth hardens the heart faster than boiling water an egg." (Ludwig Borne)

"Wealth: Any income that is at least $100 more a year than the income of one's wife's sister's husband." (H. L. Mencken)

"Love is the wisdom of the fool and the folly of the wise." (Samuel Johnson)

"Love doesn't grow on trees like apples in Eden—it's something you have to make. And you must use your imagination to make it too, just like anything else. It's all work, work." (Joyce Cary)

"Courage is rightly esteemed the first of human qualities because it is the quality which guarantees all others." (Winston S. Churchill)

"Nothing but courage can guide life." (Vauvenargues)

"Religion is a man's total reaction upon life." (William James)

"You must make your own religion, and it is only what you make yourself which will be of any use to you." (Mark Rutherford)

As students begin to analyze these quotations, they must also be able to formulate their own ideas about the meaning of words and the need to express abstract ideas in a way that others may gain understanding and appreciation from them. I then give students a list of other abstract terms, and singly or in groups, they must choose one of the words and look in books of quotations to find expressions that best convey meaningful (comical, poignant, controversial) ideas about the selected term. Some of the words I have used are *truth, honor, justice, trustworthy, loyalty, wisdom, peace, beauty, faith, immortality, pleasure*.

Rogue's Gallery

I continue the study of words in literary units also. One of the most fascinating experiences I encounter is relating word study and interpretation in a unit on mystery and suspense. I usually do the following activity close to the end of the unit.

As students have read and discussed many literary works, including all literary genres, they keep a vocabulary list of terms that we associate with mystery and suspense genres. I then pair students off, and in groups of two they are to develop a collage based on a vocabulary card they have drawn. On each card is one of the words associated with mysteries. Each group is to keep knowledge of what is on that card a secret from all other students. Then by using free-hand drawing, pictures and words and clippings from newspapers and magazines, each group is to fashion a collage that conveys the idea of the secret word; however, they may not use this word itself anywhere on the collage. They may use other words, slogans, quotes in newspapers, etc. On each vocabulary card is also a number. As a group completes its collage, it places that number in a conspicuous spot on the collage.

The collage is then placed on a bulletin board. If the class consists of thirty students, there will be fifteen different collages. These collages become known as "Rogue's Gallery." Here are some of the sample words that appear on the vocabulary cards to be converted into collages: (1) *victim*; (2) *evil*; (3) *justice*; (4) *spy*; (5) *killer*; (6) *treacherous*; (7) *scheming*; (8) *morbid*; (9) *prisoner*; (10) *jury*; (11) *verdict*; (12) *clues*; (13) *defense*; (14) *prosecute*; (15) *dispose*.

After the collages are placed around the room, each student takes a piece of paper and numbers from one to fifteen, placing a check mark by the number he/she has worked on. Then the students go around the room to determine from the pictures the single "mystery" word conveyed through each collage. All of the words used have been introduced in literary works read or discussed in class; so they are already familiar with the

words. The students are encouraged to note details very carefully and to study pictures and expressions that are used symbolically to convey the idea of the mystery word.

Before checking for the right answers, each student chooses one response to a collage other than the one he/she has worked on and writes a brief paragraph explaining why the answer selected is "bound to be correct." Then the student writes a brief paragraph explaining why the one he/she has worked on is a good representation of the mystery word on the card assigned. These brief compositions are effective ways for presenting argumentative writing and for including visual and literary interpretive explanations.

Once Upon a Time

The words "once upon a time" are among the most meaningful in the English language for those who have been raised in a house of storytellers. It is our responsibility as language arts teachers to develop a new generation of storytellers. In this activitiy, the teacher assigns a small group of students a word or phrase and asks the would-be storytellers to write a story or prepare an exciting oral presentation on the origin of the phenomenon. Here are some sample words: (1) *potluck*; (2) *blues*; (3) *breakdancing*; (4) *shadows*; (5) *infinity*; (6) *brilliance*; (7) *genius*; (8) *tally*; (9) *rock and roll*; (10) *motley*; (11) *fantasy*; (12) *dilly-dally*; (13) *diligence*; (14) *flush*; (15) *pemmican*. The students may look up the meaning of the words; however, they must fabricate a tale of how that word or phrase came into being. All stories begin with "once upon a time." This activity can be an introduction to American folklore and the "tall tales" through which students become more familiar with exaggerated explanations of various phenomena. The BFA/Phoenix Film Series on American Folklore is an excellent series to accompany this activity. In these films, ten folk heroes, including Paul Bunyan, John Henry, Glooskap, and Johnny Appleseed, are the subjects of ten different artists. Each artist chooses one folk hero and illustrates a tale about that hero. In a voice-over, a narrator tells the story with a tone that matches the mood, setting, and meaning of the specific folk hero. For example, "Pecos Bill" is portrayed in shades of brown, and the narrator has a wonderful western twang. "Johnny Appleseed" is done in pastels, and the narrator is gentle. "Paul Bunyan" is depicted humorously, and the colors and narrator are colorful and a bit beyond belief. Babe, the blue ox, is a shade of blue that dazzles the viewer's eyes.

Another "once upon a time" project is to review with students the classical fairy tales by the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen. Ask pairs of students to select one story and to write a modern version based on that story. They consider such questions as How do setting, characterizations, dialogue change from the original version? And Why are these changes suggested? I have shown students a Walt Disney version of a fairy tale and asked them to read the original version. In practically every case the students preferred the original to the Disney version.

There are a number of excellent resources for such a unit. For example James Stern has edited an excellent collection of *The Complete Brothers Grimm*, published in paperback by Pantheon. Naomi Lewis has edited an edition of *Hans Christian Andersen's Fairy Tales*, published by Penguin Books. Virginia Hamilton has edited a unique collection of American Black folktales, *The People Could Fly*, published by Knopf.

The Media Connection

After-school specials and "The Reading Rainbow" have been effective in advertising good reading materials for children of all ages. Television is here to stay, and by using media-tie-ins I have developed units of study in which media play an important part in stimulating reading, writing, and oral language. I want the students to see the changes that are necessary to move a printed page into another medium, a process that is more complex than they probably realize.

Students are usually attracted to television and the movies. I discuss with students the types of programs they enjoy, and we develop lists of programs that seem to be the most popular. We then follow this discussion by developing criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of media presentations. It is one thing to view a film or television program; it is another to develop a discussion or written assignment based on the viewing of certain programs. Students need to watch and to transfer their observations into words. We consider such questions as Do Pictures really speak louder than words? How difficult is it to convey to another person what one has seen? How can one transfer a viewing experience to another person who has never seen the program or film?

MTI/Coronet/Learning Corporation of America and Beacon Films have outstanding catalogues of short films to use in conjunction with this assignment.

I ask students to become familiar with terms used in media production: director, producer, screenwriter, costumer, set designer, make-up artist, casting director, cinematographer, etc. I divide the class into five production companies and give each a name: Twentieth Century Fox, Warner Brothers, MGM, RKO, and Columbia Pictures. Each company is to find a book or story or printed resource that it would like to transfer onto film. I let students choose their own printed source material and come up with the means of making the transfer. They almost always choose well. Recently, for example, one group did a beautiful adaptation of Robert Frost's "On Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening."

The actual adapted script is not the most important aspect of this project, however. I want the students to be able to explain the thought processes and techniques that are necessary for making a meaningful transfer. The students must demonstrate verbally, orally or in writing, these processes and the reasons for their decisions.

This project requires listening, viewing, and reasoning skills. Students must have the ability to speak and write about the sources, print and non-

print, in order to fulfill the assignments. When they do so, they are developing literary and media criticism techniques and standards which will be useful in future discussions and written assignments of a more traditional nature.

Although this is not a new idea or assignment, I find it appropriate here to ask students to choose a song lyric they enjoy and to convey the essence of that lyric in prose. Then I ask them to explain why they have selected the song that they did and to explain the relationship of the music to the lyric.

At this time I introduce my own musical bias and acquaint students with songs from Broadway musicals. My first activity is to introduce songs out of context of a particular story. From *Cats*, I use "Memory" and "Gus: the Theatre Cat." From *Lady in the Dark*, I use "The Saga of Jenny." From *Company*, I use "Another Hundred People." From *A Little Night Music*, I use "Send in the Clowns." I sometimes use different recordings of the same songs to show "style." Speaking, acting, singing, dancing, require "style" for an individual to demonstrate a unique performance. The words are the same; the performance changes. I ask them, What sensitivities are required here? I have them compare the recordings of "Send in the Clowns" by Glynis Johns and Sarah Vaughan. Then I ask, How would you explain the differences?

Then I select one musical play, such as *Fiddler on the Roof*, and we read through the play and discuss the relation of the songs to the story. Students discover there are songs that describe settings, that describe characters, and that move the plot along. This activity has stimulated many students to go to the theatre on their own and to see a professional or community theatre production.

Students are then asked to take songs and to try to convey the feelings and moods expressed in the songs in a different medium. They may use art, dance, photography, mime, or other devices of their own choosing. In today's classes I am getting more music videos than I care to see. However, they are original and the students are focusing on the language and feelings of the songs to portray their new interpretations.

Grand Finale

These activities take time, but they do produce more involved, literate, sensitive readers and writers. These are not extra credit assignments. Writers become more important to many students, and the students show a greater awareness of the techniques writers use to select the exact words to convey an idea. As they continue to read and to write, they become more masterful in their communicating abilities. They ask themselves: What's in a word? For my students the answers must come from within as they come to see that a sensitivity to the nature and values of language is essential in developing a more literate society.

Analysis of "Test for Teachers"

If you have decided that the Hemingway sentence is compound, compound-complex, or complex, congratulations, you're wrong! By giving a wrong answer, you have revealed some important things about your abilities. Most likely you are an avid reader who will read anything even something as dull as an article about classifying English sentences. Likewise, you probably have numerous interests and are receptive to the latest teaching innovations. Your willingness to give an answer that might be wrong shows your tremendous venturesome spirit that reveals you to be a person who is unafraid to express an unpopular opinion. If you have also supported your answer with further mistakes, you show yourself to be one who will always finish a job completely and not just halfway.

If you gave the correct answer of "simple" just as a guess, you are also a person with all the previously described abilities who is presently operating under the most ideal zodiac and biorhythm signs. Perhaps, you should consider buying a lottery ticket today!

If you have failed to give an answer at all, you probably are so creative that you find it too mind-boggling to try to decipher any meaning out all of those definitions. While you also show a love for reading, you would probably spend your time more profitably writing letters that Abby might print than trying to understand any grammatical concept.

If you have given the perfect answer that "this is a simple sentence because it only contains two participial phrases that modify the subject of the one independent clause," you are probably an English teacher who really knows traditional grammar. You most likely are a teacher who delights in torturing her students by having them continually analyze complex grammatical structures. Perhaps your favorite activity is to have students diagram sentences. Even though your students have supposedly studied English grammar for years, you are appalled each year to rediscover that they know little and understand less anything that relates to grammar. Each year, therefore, you begin again and resolve that you will indeed truly teach them this time to classify these structures. Yet, you always feel frustrated when students come up with such idiotic comments as "that Hemingway sentence doesn't seem so simple to me!"

P.S. Do you think Hemingway could classify his sentence correctly?

Teaching High School Students About Language Acquisition

Elizabeth Ann Poe

As part of a Development of the English Language course for juniors and seniors at our high school, I teach a language acquisition unit. This unit is preceded by two units on general language. The first general unit includes a linguistic definition of language, theories about the evolution of language, and a description of how the speech anatomy functions. The second general unit concerns linguistics and explains various approaches to describing and prescribing the grammar of the English language. We then look at ways individuals acquire the English language. The final unit involves the history of the English language. Although each unit is interesting and valuable in and of itself, it is the language acquisition unit that offers students an opportunity to apply theory to their own lives and to enrich the language development of children in their families and community. This unit takes about three of the course's nine weeks.

A week before we begin studying language acquisition, I make an interview assignment. Students are to arrange a time with their parents to question them about the students' own language development. We discuss interviewing techniques, and I ask the students to fill out two copies of the following interview form:

Form for Parent Interview

I. Pre-interview Information

1. List the children in your family according to their birth order, age differences, and sex.

Name	*Number of Months Older or Younger Than You*	*Sex*
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

2. What language or languages are spoken in your home?
3. Do you remember anything about learning to talk?

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II. Interview Questions for Parents

1. What are your first recollections of my speech development?
2. What were my first words?
3. How old was I when I spoke them?
4. Did I have any problems with my ears? If so, what?
5. Did I play with children who were older than I was? Who?
6. What sort of things were done that helped my language development?
7. Who did these with me?
8. Did I talk much once I learned to talk?
9. Do you remember anything I said that you thought was funny?

Stressing that all questions may not be answerable for everyone, I suggest the students take notes on the first copy of the form while talking to their parents or someone knowledgeable about their language development. The students then carefully transcribe these notes and expand them into complete answers on the second copy. The day the interview forms are collected marks the beginning of the unit.

We begin by discussing students' reactions to the assignment. Most students say they enjoyed talking with their parents and learning what it was like when they were learning to talk. Some describe extended dinner conversations about childhood incidents; others mention perusing baby books with their parents. Many feel they gained insight into who and what facilitated their speech development.

We return to the topic of factors which facilitate language development after we spend several days discussing theories of language acquisition espoused by linguists like Noam Chomsky and psychologists like B. F. Skinner. I emphasize that, while the complex process of language acquisition is biologically based, it is strongly dependent upon environment and that social interaction is a crucial component of that environment. Examining social interactions that should occur during various stages of language development from birth to five years is the next part of the unit.

While describing language behavior characteristics of various developmental stages, I suggest ways to provide an environment designed to stimulate language development. I stress talking, singing, and reading to children of all ages. We explore ways to talk to children so that standard usage and pronunciation are modeled, vocabulary and concepts are expanded, and self-expression and creativity are encouraged. We talk about the positive role teenagers can play in helping their brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, or children they may babysit or work with in day-care centers acquire language.

We also discuss ways that they, the parents of the future, can provide stimulating environments for their own children. Many students see

television as part of an environment that encourages language development. We take a critical look at television watching, and the lack of opportunity for social interaction with it becomes apparent. This is a delicate topic with a class of avid TV watchers, and it generates lively discussion. Several students usually want to explore this topic further for extra credit, and I suggest resources for them. Reading to children is another topic we discuss. Most students have vivid memories of grandparents, parents, or siblings reading to them, telling them stories, and answering their questions about the stories' characters or situations. This is another topic that usually interests students and that several may wish to explore on their own. Again, I suggest resources and encourage sharing their findings with the rest of the class.

I extend the topic of oral language acquisition to acquisition of the skills of reading and writing, explaining that mastery of oral language is the basis for all language-related skills. My hope is that students will provide rich language experiences for their own children at home and support educational settings that use a whole language approach.

To give students experience planning activities designed to encourage language development, an opportunity to talk with preschoolers, and a chance to observe children at various stages of language acquisition, the next part of the program is a class project involving real children. I begin this project by asking class members if they would like to have children come into our class so they can observe their speech behavior. Students have always been enthusiastic about this idea, and they hurry to volunteer their brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, neighbors, and mothers' day care groups as participants. I volunteer my own twin preschoolers and ask other faculty members to bring their children if necessary.

Once we have determined how many children will be coming, we organize a small group for each child. Two to four members per group seems optimum. Each group chooses a leader and makes plans. The planning begins by the students learning all they can about the child before he or she comes so they can understand the context of the child's language development and arrange appropriate activities such as reading to the child, going on a walk around school, playing a game, drawing on the chalkboard, and sharing refreshments. Group members must gather the necessary materials and arrange for the child to be brought to school. Because they are allowed to leave the classroom for this project, each group must find a place for the observation and indicate where it will be. The library, student center, lobby, small gymnasium, and vacant classrooms have been successful locations.

I give each student the following observation form the day before, so he or she will know what to observe:

Language Acquisition Observation Form

I. General Information about Child Observed

Name _____ Age _____ Sex _____

Relationship to the leader of your group _____

Does he or she have older or younger siblings? _____

If yes, how much older or younger are they? _____

Has the child had much experience with other children? _____

If yes, has his or her experience been with siblings? _____

With children at a preschool or play group? _____

With friends? _____ With others? _____

II. Description of Observation Activity

Name of group leader _____

Names of group members _____

_____

_____

Planning:

Activity or activities _____

_____

Materials needed _____

_____

Location _____

Necessary changes in plans _____

_____

Group Involvement:

Describe your specific interaction with the child.

Describe the interactions among the child and other members of your group.

III. Observation

General Behavior:

How did the child react to the situation, i.e. the new place, so many people, the activities, the food?

Speech Behavior:

Did the child exhibit any of the speech characteristics generally associated with children this age? _____ If yes, please give examples.

If no, please give examples of the characteristics you expected to find with a child this age.

Did the child make any logical errors? _____ If yes, what were they?

Did the child use pronouns? _____ Please give examples.

What percentage of the time did the child speak in complete sentences? _____

What percentage of the time was his or her speech intelligible? _____

Was the child able to give his or her full name? _____
Age? _____ Address? _____

Did he or she ask any questions? _____
If so, what types were they?

Did the child display any imaginary use of language? _____
Please give examples.

If the child told any stories or recited any nursery rhymes or poems, please describe them and the way the child spoke them.

What else did you observe about the child's speech?

Please evaluate this project.

On the day the children come, group members take turns interacting with the child and observing others as they interact with him or her. The observers take notes as they watch. These notes are written up into a report to be turned in the next day. This report describes the student's observations about the child's speech, the types of interactions group members had with the child, possible reasons for the child's speech behavior during the activity, and influences in the child's life which may have affected his or her language acquisition. The members of each group meet the following day to compare their observations, after which the class as a whole discusses the project.

The next day, the following letter is on the board when students enter the classroom:

Dear Development Student,

My husband and I are expecting a child in June. We understand you have studied language acquisition in your English class. Could you please tell us about the major factors that influence a child's language development and make suggestions about what we can do as parents to stimulate and facilitate our child's speech?

Thanks for your advice,
Mr. & Mrs. Speaks

Students then answer, applying their newly acquired expertise about the topic. Their replies to the Speaks' letter, which most of the students have correctly guessed to be fictitious, become the basis for the unit's culminating activity, a formal essay in which they analyze the major factors that influence language acquisition and discuss how they can apply them when working with children.

The language acquisition unit is popular with students because they are able to draw upon their own childhood experiences and apply their studies to real children. I like this unit because I sense it has implications not

only for my immediate students, who gain an appreciation for and understanding of the complexities of language development, but also for children they may influence as parents or in other capacities. It may affect these children next Saturday night, next year, or in the next decade; and it just might help them develop language skills that lead to a love for reading, writing, and learning. And I can look forward to teaching the wonderfully verbal children of my students!

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Writing a Linguistic Autobiography

Mark A. Christiansen

Of all the components in the English curriculum, undoubtedly language study is the least liked. The reason for this dislike presumably is that for many students a language lesson involves completing tedious workbook exercises. Fortunately, some years ago I stumbled upon a composition/language activity to which my students have responded with a generous portion of enthusiasm. They tell me that in writing their own linguistic autobiography they have come to know themselves better and to understand how their language has developed.

Basically, the assignment involves students' describing their own language or idiolect, noting the forces that have influenced it. In this way they show the relationship between their background and their language with its particular lexicon, pronunciation, and grammatical structures. In gathering the data to write this kind of paper, students consider some of the following elements, citing specific examples of support.

Family Background

What is your racial or ethnic background?

To what extent have members of your immediate family affected your language? Remember that your mother was probably your first English teacher.

Have any elderly relatives influenced your language growth? How?

Does anyone among your relatives speak a foreign language? As a result, have you looked upon the English language differently?

What is your father's occupation? Are there specific words associated with his job? For example, an electrician works with a fuse box, volts, and amperes.

What is your mother's occupation? Are there words she uses in conjunction with her job that you have learned?

Are there terms you have learned from attending church (e.g., *Eucharist, born again, genuflect*)?

Leisure Time Activities

What is your favorite hobby/sport? Are there words associated with it that you have learned?

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How much recreational reading do you do? Has your vocabulary been expanded because of this reading?

Have you traveled much? When you have been away from home, have any people ever called attention to certain expressions you use? Have people ever made fun of your dialect? If so, how did their cajoling make you feel?

Have your teenage friends had any effect on your pronunciation or vocabulary? Do you use much teenage jargon? Are there certain idioms that you use with your friends that you do not use with your parents?

Do you belong to any social club(s)? Are there expressions peculiar to that group that you have added to your lexicon?

Do you work after school or during the summer? Has your vocabulary been affected as a result of this employment?

Formal Education

What is your favorite subject(s) in school? Have you encountered any new words from studying this subject? For example, in biology you may have learned *paramecium*, *algae*, and *chlorophyll*.

Have you studied a foreign language? Do you use any terms from that language?

Do you engage in an extracurricular activity at school? Is there a special vocabulary associated with it?

Have you made any attempt to change your grammatical constructions or usage? If so, what specifically have you altered?

When you speak, are you conscious of using certain gestures, facial grimaces, and vocal inflections? If so, how do they support what you say?

Do you have more difficulty expressing yourself in writing than in speaking? If so, why?

What is your present attitude toward your idiolect? Are you satisfied with your pronunciation and enunciation? Does the job you would like to hold necessitate your making any modifications?

Residence

To what extent has the urban, suburban, or rural area in which you live affected your idiolect?

Do you watch much television? Have you adopted certain expressions used by your favorite TV performer?

Have you moved from one residence to another? If so, how have the neighborhoods been different? Has the neighborhood in which you now live affected your idiolect?

Does your family subscribe to a daily newspaper and/or magazines? If

so, what are the parts you like to read?

Does your speech reflect the dialect spoken in the geographical area of the country where you live? In your particular socio-economic stratum?

As secondary school teachers use this exercise in their classes, they will notice that their students are playing the part of a linguist. Students analyze their idiolect, collect data, question assumptions about their speech and writing, define key terms, categorize similarities, and make conclusions based on their findings. They are not investigating some abstract element of language, but rather they are observing their own communicating medium that helps to make them the human beings that they are. They are examining their own phonology, grammar, usage, syntax and dialect. As linguists, they are, through inquiry, acquiring knowledge about language—their language. In so doing, they may come to regard their language with greater esteem. They may even sense the humanizing dimension that language plays in their lives.

Learning English with a Foreign Accent

Elyse Eidman-Aadahl

For an English teacher it is quite naturally depressing. If only an occasional student mouthed the sentiment, or if well-meaning acquaintances did not volunteer the comment so frequently and earnestly, perhaps it would be easier to bear. But the truth is that we hear it all too often from friends and students, in the popular press and at professional conferences. "I never really understood English until I took a foreign language," people say. "Why do you think that is?" We resist the temptation to blame the victim or to blame ourselves. Perhaps we recall that we, too, never really understood the subjunctive or conditional until, stammering in Spanish class, we were required to *feel*, with some sort of linguistic intuition, that spinning out of a hypothetical thread that the choice of a verb implied, a feeling distinct from the hedgy, indirectness of our English conglomeration of "mays" and "mights."

We cannot, of course, count on our students' successes in foreign language class to teach them about English. Too few enroll, not all succeed, not all transfer their knowledge to our English classrooms. Teaching about the English language is, and should be, our job. However, we can remind ourselves of the virtue of contrastive examples, examples drawn from other languages, when we teach our students about their own. And we can illustrate that language is an intimate of culture through a cross-cultural approach to language study.

Language as a Taken-for-Granted System

Time in any English class is meant to be devoted to helping students achieve greater fluency and competency in English. A language program, however, should go beyond simply expanding and reinforcing the student's linguistic repertoire to developing concepts appropriate to the understanding of language itself, and this goal has never been more important than now. Each of us is surrounded daily by competing interests, captured in language and image, and disseminated through mass media. Few of us live within the restricted codes of the folk community where the language we speak and write is a transparent record of the consensual mores of our community; rather, we find ourselves moving among spheres of influence where language

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is both tool and weapon. Learning about the English language is more a question, as Humpty Dumpty commented to Alice, of "which is to be the master—that's all."

Linguists and anthropologists, particularly Franz Boas, Edward Sapir, and Benjamin Lee Whorf, have argued that language is a total system, one that reaches into the conceptual realm of the speaker and through that to the world view of culture.[1] American anthropologists recording and analyzing American Indian languages realized that these rapidly disappearing languages imposed a radically different structure on speech, one which seemed to force the language user into a new epistimology, a different world view. Following the linguist Saussure, they turned their attention to language as "a form and not a substance"[2]; in other words, they saw language not as an assemblage of items—notably words—with fixed meanings and functions but as a structure which mediates an individual's relationship to reality. In fact, they would argue that language provides each of us with the category system and modes of operation between categories which create, constrain, and shape perception.

But how can our students, without extended experience in another linguistic culture, understand how language and culture are interrelated? By examining the taken-for-grantedness of their own language, by seeing its systematic nature, by exploring its history, all in contrast to other patterns of linguistic experience. In short, we must offer them language study which is cross-cultural. This is not to suggest that we become foreign language teachers, merely that we teach students about English by illustrating its particular qualities as a language system connected to historical and cultural circumstances, to illustrate both what English is and what it is not. In an otherwise typical language study unit, students can research another language and bring that research to bear on aspects of their own linguistic culture. Consider what thinking can be sparked by a quick study of Japanese.

Japanese as a Foreign Accent

Language families: Japanese contrasts radically with English and bears no relationship to English or any of its neighbors. While English is arguably the most widespread language in the world, it is also a member of the most widespread family of languages—Indo-European. Over areas as broad as Europe, North and South America, Iran, Afghanistan, parts of Asia and India, the common languages share phonetic similarities, morphemes and basic structural properties. But Japanese, perhaps a member of the much smaller Altaic family of languages, has no near relative. Similarities or differences in vocabulary between Japanese and Indo-European languages peg the familial difference.

English	*French*	*Danish*	*Dutch*	*Japanese*
one	un	en	een	ichi
two	deux	to	twee	ni
three	trois	tre	drie	san
four	quatre	fire	vier	shi
five	cinq	fem	vijf	go
six	six	seks	zes	roku
seven	sept	syv	zeven	shichi
eight	huit	otte	acht	hachi
nine	neuf	ni	negen	ku
ten	dix	ti	tien	ju

A comparison of number vocabulary illustrates the family relationship between Indo-European languages even as it highlights that Japanese is no sibling.

Students who understand language families, both widespread and narrow families, can begin to speculate about possible effects. The similarity of Indo-European languages gives an added boost in learning other Indo-European second languages or in bluffing through foreign contacts. The Japanese, however, are very much isolated by their language. The uniqueness of Japanese makes foreign language learning difficult for them—more difficult, the Japanese believe, than it is for Westerners. As a member of the "modern world community," Japan must establish close ties with the United States, Australia, and Europe, all of which share English as a diplomatic and business language and have native languages which are closely related. How might this affect social and educational policy and practice in these countries?

Foreign borrowings: The uniqueness of Japanese is attributable to Japan's isolation. As an island nation having little contact with foreigners, Japan developed into a relatively homogenous nation: racially, culturally, linguistically. At crucial points in its history, Japan rejected foreign influences, closed its ports, and asserted its own individuality. Even today it is virtually impossible to become a Japanese citizen—even for the Koreans or Chinese residents who have lived there all their lives. English, by contrast, developed on an island which opened itself to neighbors and has been buffeted by international forces of change throughout its history. English, because of its foreign borrowings; incredible array of dialects, many of which broke off into separate languages; and its insinuation into most areas of the world, stands in sharp contrast to Japanese.

Yet, cross-cultural contacts have left their marks on Japanese. Their writing system is Chinese in origin, and an increasing number of foreign loan words are creating a type of pidgin Japanese. Similar to English borrowings, Japanese borrowings reflect prestige factors, as in the high status attached to Chinese borrowings in areas of philosophy or intellectual

discourse, and they reflect scientific, business, or commercial factors, as in the many borrowings from English during the Twentieth Century. A significant number of English loan words in Japanese refer to popular culture, consumer goods, upwardly mobile lifestyles, and other associations with "Westernization."

A Sampling of English Loanwords

Appu:	up; but taking a meaning more like "to improve" as in to "up one's appearance" or to "up one's lifestyle."
Besuto-ten:	best ten; as American popular culture is our ubiquitous export, so is the "top ten."
Gettsu:	get two; along with baseball, Japanese fans adopted this chant urging their team to go for a double play.
Happi-endo:	happy ending; the popularity of American movies during the occupation made this expression a natural.
Romansu-Gure:	romance grey; this is what attractive men get in their hair as they grow distinguished with age.

Students can understand the situation as comparable to English, which retained a basic Anglo-Saxon structure and vocabulary of common nouns, verbs, and function words even as it embellished itself through mammoth French, Latin, Greek, and immigrant borrowings. A study of language families and vocabulary can illustrate patterns of cultural identity and cultural contact which have left their traces in a language's historical development.

The Japanese people have a strong sense of their uniqueness which extends to their beliefs about their language. Many believe that one must be born Japanese to truly have a feel for it, that is, that race, culture, and language are one. For example, they use two separate terms for Japanese and Japanese language study: the Japanese that foreigners learn and speak is "Nihongo," while the Japanese learned and spoken by natives is "Kokugo." The two conceptual realms are distinct; regardless of her fluency or length of residence, a foreigner can never speak "Kokugo." A prominent Japanese psychologist, Doi Takeo, has even developed an analysis of Japanese "national character" based on words/concepts which appear in Japanese but in no other language.[3] But many foreigners do learn Japanese, and excellent translations of Japanese literature have appeared in English.[4] Like all languages, Japanese is systematic, and, therefore, learnable. However, there are instances where knowledge of Japanese culture is indispensable for proper language use.

Contrasting Systems: Phonemic, Syntactic, Semantic

Phonemes: Most Americans can take pot-shots at the Japanese pronunciation of English words; in fact, a recent commercial spoofed an

American who could not pronounce "Isuzu" and a Japanese who could not pronounce "Chevrolet." This commercial leads students, of course, to phoneme systems—the first line of sense-making in any language. Natives are taught to hear their language's phonemes as meaning units and to relegate other sounds either to accent differences or to noise and nonsense. In fact, there is evidence that babies begin to babble in their language's phonemic system long before they begin to mouth words.

Students can contemplate the question of the Japanese and his difficulty with the English "r" and "l." In Japanese, there is no distinction between these sounds. Both are pronounced with the tongue in an "l" position, but slightly back from the front of the mouth. To make these sounds in English, the Japanese native speaker must learn to *hear* the difference and to understand the meaning of the difference. Whorf has argued that the basic structuring of sound through a phoneme system "anesthetizes" the speaker to other phonemic relationships making it difficult literally to hear the phonemic differences of another tongue. If this is true, in what other ways might learning our native tongue "anesthetize" us?

Students can experience the Japanese speaker's difficulty by listening to recordings of Japanese speech. Unlike the romance languages, Japanese offers no cognates or near relations to capture his ear. Japanese phonemes flow by the English ear an unbroken stream. Whereas English speakers accent syllables heavily, Japanese speakers use little force in accenting syllables, speaking in a steady staccato stream. Students will feel the difficulty of even knowing where words start and stop. How different, then, must poetry and song sound without the rat-a-tat-tat of English artillery-like accent patterns. How completely we are accustomed to the rhythm and sounds of our native tongues.

Syntax: The Japanese syntactical system is also quite different than English. Students might study how English gradually came to lose most of its inflections and by necessity invest meaning in word order. Modern romance languages retain a few more inflections, such as gender for nouns and adjectives, but still rely on word order. Japanese invests much of its meaning in syllables, floating morphemes, which are called "particles" or "post-positions." In contrast to "pre-positions," or morphemes which precede the word, post-positions tag along afterwards. The particle "ka" at the end of a sentence indicates a question. The particles "wa" or "ga" indicate a theme and a subject, carrying roughly the sense of "as for X this is what I would say about it." As the examples illustrate, sentence structure is radically different.

Japanese sentence structure

Komodo	*ga*	tomodachi	*no*	inu	*ni*	mizu	*o*	yaru.
child	subject of verb "yaru"	friend	possessor of	dog	indirect object	water	direct object	gives

(The child gives water to her friend's dog.)

The particles, though not normally underlined or italicized, are markers which indicate the syntax of the sentence. Illustrated here are subject, possessive, IO, and DO markers.

This is in contrast to even such a distant language as Chinese. Because the rules of Chinese word order are so similar to English, Chinese speakers—for example, the many Chinese brought to the United States to work on the westward expansions of our railroads—could begin to communicate effectively with English speakers as soon as they could learn simple English vocabulary. Plucking English words into Chinese sentences created a simple, but communicative, pidgin English.

Semantics/Sociolinguistics: S. I. Hayakawa pioneered American interest in semantics, the study of words as socially constituted symbols. Recently, sociolinguistics has developed as a specialty within linguistics concerned with language use in its social context. Japanese offers an interesting comparison with English in these two areas as well.

To a far greater degree than English, Japanese codifies social arrangements and relationships in language. English speakers are used to adopting levels of politeness and intimacy for different speakers—avoiding slang in a job interview, using careful euphemisms with Aunt Matilda, developing a private language with a spouse. Japanese, however, offers the speaker a range of exacting linguistic forms to convey deference and exhibit social structures through speech patterns.

Japanese verbs and adjectives can be used in plain style or polite style. Further style distinctions affecting not only verbs but other parts of speech and vocabulary create honorific or respect styles known as "keigo" and allow the speaker to show deference to someone of higher status when either addressing that person or speaking about that person. These levels offer the speaker several ways of saying the same thing: for example, "to say" is "yu" (neutral), "mosu" (polite), or "ossharu" (highly respectful). As regards levels of politeness, one really does need to understand the complex vertical relationship in Japanese society to speak appropriately. For example, Japanese women use more honorifics than men reflecting the relative status positions society accords them. Japanese can speak with confidence about feminine language and masculine language.

American scholars have been interested in their own versions of "level of politeness." The question of gendered language applies to English as well: do women have characteristic speech patterns distinct from men? If so, how are they learned and used, and what is the effect of their violation or absence? And if language colors thought, do masculine and feminine

speech patterns affect perception?

American students bristle at the thought of adopting humbling language in the presence of a high status individual—failing to recall that Americans carefully adjust their speech patterns to the social situation as well. However, the systems are distinct in the degree of codification and formality accorded the practice. Again we can only speculate on the cultural effects of such language differences. Some argue that the Japanese system is too constricting, like an old shoe grown too tight, for the free wheeling social pace accompanying modernization. The clarity with which the language user can perceive the differential status accorded to women, for example, concerns others. Yet some argue that the explicitness of the system puts the Japanese at greater ease among themselves, that the levels of politeness are second nature to them and serve as a comforting social foundation during a period of rapid social change.

Formidable Obstacle: The Japanese Writing System

And finally we come to the Japanese writing system. The Japanese did not develop an indigenous writing system. They borrowed from the Chinese their system of ideograms, or figures which stand for a single word, called "kanji." Despite the assumption by many Westerners, for example Ezra Pound, that Chinese ideograms "picture" an idea, that is not the case any more than our letter "A" pictures a ram's head turned upside down. These pictures form the history of the ideograms and the letter "A," but they are no longer recognized by anyone but the most specialized scholar.

Chinese ideograms are beautiful. They turn writing into art, and calligraphy is practiced as written art by Japanese at all levels of society. A haiku written in calligraphy is a poem and a painting; Japanese brush painting and calligraphy are first cousins. However, there is a catch. The Japanese must learn thousands of these individual characters. The school curriculum, for example, prescribes that 881 must be learned by the end of elementary school and 1,850 by the end of high school. Some kanji have as many as two dozen strokes to them. In addition, most kanji can be pronounced more than one way. But that is only the beginning of the difficulties.

Since Japanese and Chinese are not closely related, the Chinese kanji were not sufficient for transcribing spoken Japanese. To fill in the gaps, the Japanese invented two separate groups of syllabic scripts known as kana: hirangana and katakana. These characters, contrary to kanji, stand for sounds, not words or ideas. Each set of characters numbers forty-eight, more characters than the English alphabet, and is written in a different style. The cursive and flowing hiranga are usually combined with Chinese characters to write Japanese words. Foreign loanwords are usually written in the angular katakana; therefore foreign words *look* foreign.

The educational system, definitions of literacy, categories of writing and art are all affected by the difficulty of the writing system. As one concrete example of a specific effect, consider the difficulties of creating a computer

or a word processor for a language with several thousand kanji, and forty-eight hiragana and katakana characters. The difficulties Japanese computer firms face illustrate the powerful stamp of language on all a society's endeavors.[5]

Questions for the Class to Explore

Naturally, a thorough study of any foreign language requires more time than an English teacher would likely want to spend. However, selective contrast cross-cultural language activities can sharpen students' inquiry into their own language. A language survey can suggest a host of open-ended, thought-provoking questions which enhance any language study unit:

- How do languages reflect, refract, or shape culture?
- How does language structure perception?
- How can facts of language influence history even as history determines language?
- And finally, what are some of the systematic, yet infinitely creative options people pursue in creating language?

All of these questions can be debated in the English classroom with foreign accents.

Notes

[1]For pioneers of this view see Benjamin Lee Whorf, *Language, Thought and Reality*, John Carroll, ed. MIT Press, 1956; Edward Sapir, *Selected Writings in Language Culture and Personality*, David Mandelbaum, ed. Univ. of California Press, 1949; and recent work by anthropologists such as Dell Humes. Also, Kenneth Pike's distinction between phonetic (etic) and phonemic (emic) difference has been foundational in anthropology.

[2]Ferdinand De Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, Wade Baskin, trans. McGraw Hill, 1966, p. 122.

[3]Takeo Doi, *Anatomy of Dependence*, John Bester, trans. New York: Kodansha International, 1973; *The Anatomy of Self: the Individual vs. Society*, Mark Harbison, trans. Kodansha International, 1986.

[4]For beautiful, authoritative translations of Japanese literature, look for works by Donald Keene. Also, *Japanese Literature in Translation* is a handy reference source for locating new translations. For a brief, but substantial discussion of Japanese perceptions of their cultural uniqueness, particularly as they emphasize "internationalization" as a social policy, see Harumi Befu, "Internationalization of Japan and Nihon Bunkaron," *The Challenge of Japan's Internationalization*, Mannori and Befu, eds. Kodansha International, pp. 232-66.

[5]An account of the Japanese attempts to solve the computer dilemma appear in an article by Andrew Pollack, "The Keyboard Stymies Japan: Language is Huge Barrier," *The New York Times*, June 7, 1984, III, p. 3.

For Further Reading

Various East Asian outreach centers have produced good introductions to Japanese for American elementary and secondary students. See particular materials on the "List of Japanese Teaching Materials" from Bonjin Sha Japanese Curriculum Project, U.S. - Japan Cross Cultural Center, JACCC

Suite 305, 244 South San Pedro Street, Los Angelos, CA 90012. The Project on East Asian Studies in Education (PEASE) has produced "An Introduction to Japanese Language." Write to PEASE, University of Michigan, 108 Lane Hall, Ann Arbor, MI 48109. For an "Introduction to Japanese: Hirangana" which includes a teacher's guide, student workbook, text and audio tapes, contact Stanford Program in Intercultural Education (SPICE) at Room 200, Lou Henry Hoover Building, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305. This package can be ordered in a K-6 or a 7-12 version. Finally, the Mid-Atlantic Region Japan-in-the-Schools Program (MARJIS) supplies resource lists and materials to Virginia educators. Contact them at MARJIS, College of Education, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742. Recent scholarly works on Japanese in its social context include two books by Roy Andrew Miller, *The Japanese Language in Contemporary Japan*, American Enterprise Institute, 1977 and *Japan's Modern Myth: The Language and Beyond*, University of Chicago Press, 1982.

Language Teaching Resources
A Library for Teaching about the English Language

Donald J. Kenney

Have you ever wondered what a "white elephant" is? Why someone's name should be "mud"? Who should eat "humble pie"? Why "getting the sack" should be so called? These are just a few of the curiosities of the English language that can arouse the interest of students.

Language study is usually confined to grammar and usage, spelling, punctuation and perhaps a little of dictionary use and history thrown in to spice things up. The study of the history and varieties of our language can enrich students' experience and appreciation of the English language. With the technicalities and the scholarly jargon removed, language history and varieties have a great potential for students in the middle and high school. Sources of words, expressions, personal and place names can be fun and exciting for students.

However, one problem that many teachers face is the difficulty of finding materials about language that are suitable for students. Many of the materials available are exclusively intended for scholars. Most of the textbooks available and adopted by school systems tend to ignore the history and varieties of our language as potential areas of study for middle and secondary students. As English teachers have begun to discover the excitement of language study and to develop teaching units for their students, they have found little in print that they could use. But, in the past few years, more readable and interesting books on our language have become available that are well suited to middle school and secondary level students. In addition, there are old standards that are still in print. While the sources on the English language do not rival other types of materials being published for students, surprisingly there are many sources for teachers to draw on.

Designing a unit on the English language can be accomplished with a visit to your school and public library. Browsing in the collection can probably produce good results. Most school and public libraries use the Dewey Decimal system and browsing through the 400's, which is the classification area for language history, would be one way to discover what may be available. Consulting with the librarian, who may know of other

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important works in the collection, can help you in finding sources of materials that are readable and interesting to your students.

Etymological Study

Words

Students are naturally curious about words. They like to learn new words that they can try out on their friends and family to impress or puzzle them. Students have a natural curiosity about the origins of their language, and teachers can capitalize on this interest. There are numerous sources that are available on etymology including several standard works which you would want to introduce to your students.

No study of the history of English would be complete without the use of *The Oxford English Dictionary*. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, commonly called the "OED," documents the etymological development of the English language. This work is available in a twelve-volume set with supplements and in a compact, inexpensive two-volume version that requires the use of a magnifier. Using the multi-volume set helps to dispel some common notions that students typically have concerning dictionaries. Students are always amazed that this work is more than one volume and is so comprehensive in its coverage of the language. This dictionary is considered the authoritative source for the etymology of English words. Entries include dates for the first recorded use of English words as well as quotes from literary sources illustrating various uses of a word. *The Second Barnhart Dictionary of New English* is an interesting contrast to the *Oxford English Dictionary*. *The Barnhart Dictionary* traces the entry of new words into English such as "AIDS," "pc," and "computer orphan." Each entry includes the use of the term from sources that usually are current news sources such as *Newsweek*, the *New Yorker*, or a television broadcast. There are quarterly updates to the dictionary and an address is given for individuals to submit entries.

The Origins of English Words by Joseph T. Shapley is a highly readable one-volume work on word origins. This concise work, alphabetically arranged, is anecdotal and traces words across the centuries. Entries include familiar words such as "apple" and tracks the origins of particularly puzzling expressions such as "apple-pie order," which, by the way, had nothing to do either with the fruit or pastry of an apple pie. Peter Davis' *Roots: Family Histories of Familiar Words* takes a slightly different approach to word origins. This work traces many of our common English words such as "father," "mother," "moon," "eat," and "weave" and attempts to show that English word origin is traceable back 6000 years to the prehistory Indo-European language. This source is easy to understand and to use. It offers a case history of one hundred Indo-European roots and shows how they appear in modern English. Morton S. Freeman's *The Story Behind the Word* is another valuable, relevant source of word origins. His volume is arranged as a dictionary and contains selected English words, starting with "abracadabra." It gives the reader a brief history and origin of each

word.

Phrases and Expressions

Another rich area of study of our language is the examination of phrases and expressions. English is a language that is colorful and highly dependent upon idioms and everyday expressions. It is impossible to get through a day without using or hearing some catch phrase. Many appear to be modern but actually have been in existence for centuries. Students use numerous phrases and expressions that they could trace; and many idioms and everyday expressions are unique to ethnic groups, certain occupations and trades, geographical regions of the country, and even to age groups. *One Potato, Two Potato...* is an excellent source to use to get students to think about phrases and everyday expressions. This book traces the history of jokes (Do you have Prince Albert in a can?), jeers, clapping games, jump rope rhymes, riddles, and parodies that are still a part of growing up. A very early book, and now considered a standard book on idioms, is Charles Funk's *A Hog on Ice*. It was published in 1948 and has now been reissued and is available in paperback. This is one of those books that you really cannot put down and is evidence that books on language do not have to be dull. Funk includes many phrases and idioms that will be familiar to you and your students, including "independent as a hog on ice," "lame duck," "horse of another color," "cock-and-bull story," and "in the bag."

Equally important for a study of phrases is *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* (Evans), which traces the origins of such expressions as "to keep body and soul together" and "pallbearers." One of the most momentous works on word and phrase origin is *Morris Dictionary of Word and Phrase Origins* by William and Mary Morris. It was originally published in three volumes from 1962-1972 and recently has been reissued by the publisher in one volume. This work is arranged as a dictionary, and the coverage and scope are very broad. You will find that some of the later publications listed here actually duplicate some of the material available in the Morris set. *Everyday Phrases: Their Origins and Meanings*, (Ewart), originally published in England, is a concise volume on the more common phrases of the English language such as "dull as ditchwater," "eat humble pie," and "getting the sack."

Names

Many of our English words have come from the names of individuals. *A Dictionary of Eponyms* (Beeching), is an excellent source for your students to discover words commonly used in English which are names of people. For example, if you call someone a "Casanova," you are, of course, aware that the term comes from the name of the famous Italian adventurer who was notorious for his amorous escapades. Your students may have heard their grandparents refer to plastic as "Bakelite," the term commonly used in the 1930's for plastic products so-called for the inventor of the product, the Belgian born scientist, Leo Baekeland.

Slang and Jargon

For the purists, slang and jargon are considered the true corrupters of our language. Edwin R. Newman's *Strictly Speaking* focuses on what he sees as the sorry state of the English language due primarily to the use of slang and jargon. Yet slang and jargon have enriched our language and show the versatility and vitality of English. This area of language study is one that your students will be most familiar with. In fact they probably will be able to teach you something, thus sharing their expertise.

A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English by Eric Partridge is the standard work about slang in the English language and is now in its eighth edition. Entries are arranged as a dictionary and include the definition or explanation of the slang word or phrase, a classification of each expression as colloquial or slang, and a discussion of the main users of the term. *The Dictionary of Clichés.* (Rogers) traces many recent additions to the language especially those that have come from new technologies and space explorations. For example, "A-OK" is a space-age term first employed by John A. Powers, a spokesman for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and used in connection with the first manned space flight in 1961 to indicate that the mission was going well. Another good source for contributions from the technical world can be found in *Talking Tech: A Conversational Guide to Science and Technology* (Rheingold). This source on slang takes the approach that everyone is talking tech: "fission," "fusion," "lazers," and "quasars" are indeed buzzwords. *Talking Tech* explores the language that once was the private property of scientists but that has now become part of the universal language of the 1980's.

Collections of sayings that are commonly used and understood but rarely found in a dictionary can be found in *Slanguage America's Second Language.* (Carothers and Lacey). "Dumb ox," "give a hoot," "and playing 'possum" are defined in this work. Don E. Miller's *The Book of Jargon: An Essential Guide to the Inside Language of Today* is topically arranged by categories and includes chapters on "Terms that Everyone Needs to Know," which cover medicine, law, auto mechanics, and real estate. Other chapters deal with the jargon and slang of the media, arts, entertainment, sports, physical fitness, gardening, the subcultures, and, yes, even wine and drugs. Another general book on slang that is intended for a younger audience is *Slanguage* by John Artman. Two books that you may want to reserve strictly for your own references are *Slang and Jargon of Drugs and Drink* (Spears) and *Slang & Euphemism: A Dictionary of Oaths, Curses, Insults, Sexual Slang & Metaphor, Racial Slurs, Drug Talk, Homosexual Lingo & Related Matters* (Spears).

General Sources

For a general background on the history of English, you may want to turn to several of the following sources. *The Story of English*, which was the companion to the recent PBS televison series on the history of the

English language, tells the history of the English language in a popular way. It is a beautifully illustrated book and deals with such language issues as Why do the people of Newfoundland speak English with an Irish brogue? and What do Australians have in common with Cockneys?

Charles Berlitz's *Native Tongue* is a much more philosophical treatment of the history of the language, how languages started, and the influences of different languages on English. *I Hear America Talking* (Flexner) presents the history of American English through American history and attempts to show language as an integral part of that history. For example, out of certain periods of American history can be traced the entry of words and phrases such as "taxation without representation," "carpetbaggers," and the "KKK."

Studying the origins of our language can give students insight into other aspects of the language program. Incorporating some language history into the curriculum has been made easier in the last few years by the availability of more sources for teachers to draw on. Following is the complete bibliographical information on the sources mentioned in the essay. While all of them are valuable for teachers in planning a study of language, many are also attractive reference and reading sources for students themselves.

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Teacher Education

Prospective Teachers Writing to Learn Grammar

Warren Self

The advanced grammar course I teach to juniors and seniors in college is designed to help them become effective English language arts teachers in elementary and secondary classrooms. The reason that prospective teachers should take such a course is perhaps most clearly articulated in Constance Weaver's *Grammar for Teachers: Perspectives and Definitions* (NCTE, 1979). Weaver argues convincingly that teachers of English language arts need extraordinary knowledge about how the language is structured, how it works, and how people use it. They need a thorough grounding in descriptive grammar, and they need insights into how meaning is expressed and understood through both spoken and written language. Moreover, they should understand how their knowledge of grammar can make it possible for them to help students develop greater fluency in all the language processes—speaking, listening, writing, and reading.

What Weaver does not address is how prospective teachers can acquire this rich knowledge about language. Writing about grammar and language processes has become for my students a very important part of their learning. Throughout their study of grammar, they write speculatively and reflectively about what they are encountering in their textbooks and in their attempts to analyze sentences. This writing encourages them to think, and to learn as much as they can so they can become effective in helping others become skillful, confident language users.

Prospective teachers who develop this specialized knowledge about language should not, however, rush into elementary and high school classrooms ready to make sure that their students develop the same kind of grammatical and linguistical knowledge that they have. Weaver identifies two kinds of grammatical knowledge: one is needed by English language arts teachers. As language specialists, these teachers need an explicit knowledge of grammar and the language processes. Their students, on the other hand, need a strong intuitive knowledge of grammar and extensive practice with the language processes.

Elementary and secondary school students should be able to depend on teachers to help them learn to speak and write sentences effectively and

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to read and listen perceptively. Students trying to become fluent language users do not need the ability to articulate the rules by which sentences are created, nor do they need to explain how people process language. In short, English language arts teachers should use their explicit knowledge of language to help students become excellent producers and consumers of language.

As teachers work with students, helping them become better readers, listeners, writers, and speakers, they can employ their knowledge of grammar and the language processes to diagnose students' problems and to develop appropriate language activities. Teachers who understand how their students acquire and process language will be able to distinguish between developmental errors (those that indicate a person is attempting to acquire a new syntactical feature, for example) and errors caused by dialectical interference, carelessness, dyslexia, or some other problem. Teachers with an explicit knowledge of grammar can devise appropriate activities that treat the causes of errors and that have the likelihood of helping students progress. More importantly, these teachers can allow students' language errors to inform and guide their teaching if they regard errors as signals indicating what kinds of instruction are appropriate to facilitate students' progress.

In a young student's writing, let's suppose a teacher often finds sentences like these: "When I grow up. I will go to Disney World." A skillful teacher with an explicit knowledge of grammar can observe this pattern of error and infer that the student is attempting to acquire a more sophisticated syntactical pattern in written English. That teacher's problem, then, is how to help the student progress from "When I grow up. I will go to Disney World." to "When I grow up, I will go to Disney World." If the teacher only calls the student's attention to the error—the sentence fragment—and penalizes the student for the error, the frustrated student will do something to avoid the punishment. One possibility for the student is to stop trying to write the more complicated sentence pattern. This regressive behavior is not desirable. If, on the other hand, the teacher recognizes that the student's error may be developmental and that what the student needs is help in completing the acquisition of this new syntactical feature, then the student may make some progress as a result of errors and constructive intervention.

This progress, however, will depend largely on the kind of help the teacher provides at this juncture. The teacher could launch into a technical explanation of grammar, explaining that "When I grow up, I will go to Disney World." results from the combination of two basic sentences. One sentence, the teacher could explain, has been subordinated to the other by the addition of a subordinate conjunction in the initial position, thereby creating a complex sentence with a dependent clause functioning adverbially. The teacher could even point out that the introductory adverb clause needs to be separated from the independent clause with a comma. By such an explanation, the student would probably be amazed greatly and helped

little.

What the teacher needs to use at this juncture, however, is just that kind of grammatical knowledge. What the teacher should not do is transmit that technical knowledge directly to the student. Rather, the teacher should use that explicit knowledge of grammar to devise appropriate work to help the student acquire the new syntactical structure. In a case like this student's, Weaver would suggest that teachers use appropriate sentence-combining activities as one way of helping the student develop an intuitive knowledge of that syntactical pattern. A teacher could give the student several sentences that have introductory adverb clauses and show the student how to combine pairs of basic sentences to imitate these models. With this kind of practice, the student will likely acquire this new syntactical feature and begin using it skillfully in writing. Moreover, the teacher could provide the student with reading selections in which that sentence pattern occurs often. Through such teaching of this syntactical structure, the student can learn to use it correctly without ever having to learn the abstract rules that describe its generation.

A good language user does not have to be able to articulate the very precise rules that govern language production and reception. In Weaver's words "teachers need not *teach* grammar so much as use their own knowledge of grammar in helping students understand and use language more effectively" (p. 6). Acquiring an explicit knowledge of grammar so that as teachers they can use it to help others develop a good intuitive knowledge of sentences is a goal I set for students in my advanced grammar course. It is not, however, enough for them to be able to do some diagrammatic analysis of a sentence if they cannot say what their diagram represents and if they cannot explain clearly and precisely why their analysis is valid. I suspect that when students write about their knowledge of grammar, they engage in a thoughtful activity that refines and sharpens that knowledge. I know that when they do this kind of writing and share it with me, they provide me with opportunities to examine their thinking, to ask questions, or to suggest alternative ways of thinking about a matter.

A problem in any grammar course is that the study of language can begin to seem as if it is only a matter of memorizing rules. If students try to remember many rules but do not fully understand how the rules are related to one another and to basic sentence patterns, they may feel overwhelmed and they may learn little that will last beyond the date of the final test. To help prevent that sense of cognitive overload and to encourage a more active attempt to understand syntax, I ask students to analyze sentences and write about their features. This pattern of study imitates the behavior of linguists. Linguists observe language features, analyze sentences, and infer descriptive rules. Eventually they create a set of rules that describes how a language is structured and how it operates.

In a loose-leaf learning log, I ask students to write speculatively about English sentences in order to understand the features sentences share and the ways in which they differ. For example, I ask students to write about

the following pair of sentences in order to describe how each sentence is different and how each is alike. I also ask them to write rules to account for the creation of the sentences.

John gave Mary a ball.
Mary was given a ball by John.

Then I ask them to explain why the following sentence, *John is Mary's friend*, cannot have a form like *Mary was given a ball by John.*

Of course, their textbooks already express and illustrate rules that govern the syntactic structures and transformations, but those rules are in the language of other grammarians and textbook writers. Through the writing that my students do about English syntax, they have to translate textbook information into their own language, a process that enhances—or even makes possible—their understanding. Over the semester, they essentially write their own verions of the textbook as they create their personal understanding of English syntax. This writing is first-draft, exploratory writing. The audience for that writing is themselves and other students primarily; I serve as a secondary audience. Often, they share their exploratory writing with one another in the process. I frequently read and respond to their writing so I can gain an understanding of what they are thinking. I use that understanding to shape the instruction and the focuses of subsequent class meetings.

In their exploratory writing, students who write about grammatical problems have an opportunity to articulate very precisely their knowledge of grammar. When they attempt that, they require themselves to express what they know. As importantly, they also frequently discover what they do not so clearly understand. Those discoveries allow them to frame questions to which their classmates and I can respond. Their writing is an integral part of their learning. Following is an example of the kind of writing and learning to which I refer.

At a point when they had nearly completed the study of the ten basic sentence patterns in their textbook, students were given these two sentences to diagram and were then asked to write a paragraph in which they explained how these two apparently similar sentences were substantially different from one another.

(A) My husband made me a chocolate cake.
(B) My husband made me a happy woman.

After diagraming these sentences, Melinda wrote the following paragraph.

> The two sentences above look a lot alike, but they are different. "A" is a pattern 8 sentence, and "B" is a pattern 10 sentence. Sentence "A" has a NP1, V-tr, NP2, and NP3 (three different noun phrases which refer to three different people or things). Sentence "B" has NP1, V-tr, NP2, and NP2. In this case it has two NP2's because they both—"me" and "a happy woman"—are the same person. As I indicated above, both sentences contain a transitive verb, "made." Both sentences have a different meaning. In sentence "A," "me" is the indirect object. In sentence "B," "me" is the direct object (her husband changed her). In sentence "A" he actually constructed a cake for her.

Although this paragraph of analysis is not as precise and as fully explanatory as Melinda might have been able to make it later in her study, it clearly suggests that she is beginning to understand several important things about grammar. She is making use of both syntactical and semantical evidence to help her make the analysis. She has distinguished between two transitive verb patterns and used the noun phrase referents to help her do that; and she has noted that, semantically, *made* is different in the two sentences, expressing the notion that some change has been effected in the direct object of sentence "B"—a characteristic of verbs in sentence patterns 9 and 10 but not a characteristic of verbs in pattern 8 sentences.

That Melinda can do the diagrams correctly suggests that she perceives some differences in these two sentences. That she can write the paragraph as she did confirms for me—and for her—that she understands what the differences are. Very likely, the writing of the paragraph helped her to know more distinctly some of the differences.

A student who recently completed this course wrote this about the influence of exploratory writing on learning grammar:

> The entries explaining the parts of the diagrammed sentences were the biggest positive influence on my learning. These helped me the most because I basically could diagram a sentence, but I couldn't explain what the names of certain parts were. These entries helped me to stop and think about what I was diagramming and why I diagrammed that way.

Students who can express their knowledge in precise terms and in exact relationships know grammar better than students who cannot. For English language arts teachers, a full, explicit knowledge of grammar is necessary if they are to help students become better language users. I use writing in my advanced grammar class to help prospective teachers acquire that explicit knowledge. Additionally, I use writing to help them practice using that knowledge in ways that are appropriate to their careers as teachers.

To complement their exploratory writing, students in the advanced grammar class write a short paper that they take through several drafts. That paper allows them to think about how they will use their knowledge of grammar once they become teachers. The paper may, for example, take the form of a position paper in which they indicate what uses they will make of their knowledge of grammar and why they think those uses are appropriate. Or they may be asked to write a report to a principal explaining why they have chosen not to mark all the grammatical errors on their students' written work. In that explanation they could use their knowledge of how writers acquire syntactical features to show their principal that some errors are developmental and are signs of linguistic progress. They could indicate reasons for not marking those errors as mistakes and indicate what they plan to do about those errors in lieu of that strategy.

In writing papers of these sorts, students have to think about how they will use their specialized knowledge of grammar to help people who do not share their level of expertise. This is always the English language arts teacher's situation in the classroom. Students do not share the teacher's

level of expertise; they do not know how to describe the language they use. Nor do they generally want to learn to describe it. Rather, students want to learn to use language more powerfully. At least they *can* want this if their immersion in language is made interesting and if they are led to understand that language empowers them. Teachers are in classrooms to help students become better users of the language. But to be successful, teachers must be expert diagnosticians and developers of language experiences. Teachers who have a deep explicit knowledge of grammar and the language processes can help students listen, speak, read, and write better. One result I must ensure is that the prospective teachers with whom I work have the knowledge of grammar they need. Their writing about grammar is a way to ensure that.

Great English Teaching Ideas

EDITOR'S NOTE: As many teachers have discovered, *composing* is essential to learning. Whether students are learning to read, to understand scientific concepts, to analyze character development in literature, or to synthesize information in social studies, *composing their own knowledge* is both motivational and enlightening. The teachers who have supplied the "Great Teaching Ideas" below understand this principle and are using it in their classrooms—across the curriculum.

Denny Wolfe, Director
Tidewater Writing Project
Old Dominion University

In Praise of Serendipity

"Ask her what the Greeks had for breakfast," we used to plot in Miss Cutler's world history class. "That will keep her wound up all period." Sure enough, that maiden lady with pleated skirt, broadcloth blouse and sensible shoes would lead us along sun-baked Mediterranean shores, over rocky mountains and through olive groves in search of morning nourishment. On task? Hardly. Yet those sessions that meandered through the ages were golden ones for me. We may have breakfasted by the end of the class, but I was always hungry for more.

I recalled such educational feasts recently as my English class was studying *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. Early in the novel, young Tess Durbeyfield, at her mother's urging, journeys to the large estate of the d'Urbervilles to claim kin with that prosperous family. The heroine receives the attention of Alec, a metaphor for salaciousness, who plies her with strawberries and roses and later in the dark woods of the Chase seduces her.

The students were outraged. How could Tess, the essence of purity be so sullied by this Snidley Whiplash? Is nothing fair in this world?

I could have gone on with my original plan; there were many more pages before the black flag was lowered at the end of Hardy's work. I paused. .. and serendipity prevailed.

"Why don't you write Alec a letter?" I asked the class. I bet you could really tell him a thing or two."

"But it's just a story, black words on white paper. Right?"

"Wrong. Alec is very real to you now. Tell him what you think."

Did they ever. Not only was the vision, honor and integrity of this Nineteenth Century antagonist maligned; his come-uppance was acutely and speedily desired by my young idealists seeking poetic justice. Alec had become so alive that we expected him to walk into the room. It is fortunate that literary necessity kept him book-bound until his demise. It was to these ends that the students pursued him.

Anyone closely scrutinizing my lesson plans will not find a category designated "Serendipity." Yet it is there, waiting subliminally to take me and my charges beyond the class bounds. And whenever it beckons, I hope

we are wise enough and fortunate enough to follow it to the next proffered educational feast.

Frances S. Newton
English Teacher
Norview High School
Norfolk, VA

Bowl 220—Teaching the Novel

Normally, when teaching a novel, I have key concepts which I want students to recognize. In order to avoid teacher-dominated discussion, I use Bowl 220. It is a great way to have the students make their own discoveries.

Bowl 220...

...elicits more pupil involvement because of group security;
...allows teacher monitoring and evaluating of student work;
...side-steps boring teacher-dominated discussion;
...encourages student interaction;
...strengthens public speaking skills.

Procedure

1. Divide the class into teams (three to five members each, depending on class size).
2. Have each team select a team name and appoint a captain. (Team names eliminate confusion for the teacher.)
3. Give each team a question written on an index card. (Question should elicit high level thinking skills.)
4. Allow ten to twenty minutes, depending on the difficulty of the questions, for each group to write their answers.
5. Have each group go to the front of the room, read their question and provide the answer. Instruct other students and groups to take notes on the questions and answers provided by each group.
6. Encourage other groups to react and challenge.
7. Award points for the answers and extra credit points for challenging and providing a correction when a group has given inaccurate information.
8. Record points on an index card for each group for easy record keeping.
9. Use the points however you wish. I use them for quiz grades.

Terri Baker
English Teacher
Maury High School
Norfolk, VA

Making Vocabulary Useful

Teaching vocabulary has always been a sore spot with me. As a student I never retained the long lists of definitions beyond test day. As a teacher, I likewise lack confidence that my students do. This neatly disguised exercise accomplishes an ulterior goal.

Character Vocabulary

. . . offers an interesting deviation from the typical vocabulary exercise;
. . . assures greater chance of retention.

Procedure

1. Give students a list of words relating to character development with the page numbers from the literary work which you are studying.
2. Have students copy the sentence which contains the word from the text.
3. Have students assign words to certain categories designating what the word does: describes the effect of the setting on a character; describes a character's behavior; describes a character's appearance; describes how other characters perceive a particular character, and so on.
4. Have students guess the meaning of the word, using the dictionary only as necessary.
5. Have students select a particular character and write a paragraph on character development. They can use the words themselves as clues to character development and the sentences and phrases they copied as textual support.

Terri Baker
English Teacher
Maury High School
Norfolk, VA

Dear Ernie

Until a year ago, writing assignments for my science students consisted of lab reports, notes, and summaries written with me as the audience. Then I discovered the power of expressive writing and "Ernie." Ernie is a rather simple but lovable character who appears on local TV milk advertisements. The students are familiar with Ernie and love to write to him to "educate" him. I display a poster of Ernie in my classroom, and we write to him periodically to explain a concept we have learned. The students are aware that they are not writing to the real Ernie, but this does not seem to inhibit them. All they need is a picture of a person other than me to write to and to be aware of his limitations.

Ernie has become an institution in my classroom; and, if I forget for a while to request letters, the students will actually complain and ask to write to him. The students write much more detailed explanations of their

thinking to Ernie than when I am the direct audience. I think that when they write for me, a teacher, they assume I can read their minds; but they know that someone like Ernie cannot do this. When I read and reply as Ernie to these letters, it is an enjoyable experience, unlike the usual grading task. These communications are graded on an all-or-nothing basis: write and you get the full grade.

The stimulus for writing lies in Ernie's friendly and non-critical replies. Sometimes he will ask questions, and these stimulate further thought and the need for students to clarify a concept. The students freely tell Ernie if they are not sure of something. They show concern that he should understand fully, and they also demonstrate considerable good humor.

This kind of personal summary of a concept allows students to express their learning in their own words to a non-judgmental audience. I have found that this expressive form of writing advances their learning far more than an impersonal account of what they know. The letters and replies are treasured and do not end up in the wastebasket, as so many other teacher-graded assignments used to do.

Joy Young
Science Teacher
Ruffner Middle School
Norfolk, VA

Puzzling Through Social Studies

Here is a prewriting activity I use in Social Studies:

1. In groups of three, each student is given a puzzle packet.
2. Each packet contains four pieces.
3. Students are directed to
   - look at their pieces and think about the item written on the puzzle piece;
   - determine which of the pieces are related;
   - retain these pieces;
   - pass on to another group member pieces that do not relate to each other;
   - analyze the pieces received from another group member; and
   - retain any that relate to the pieces already acquired.
4. Do this until each group member has the four pieces that relate to each other and make a geometric shaped puzzle.
5. Each group discusses the relationship of the pieces of their puzzles and together writes a sentence which expresses the idea for each member's puzzle.

6. I give an assignment in a full rhetorical context: purpose, audience, writer's role, mode, and flavor.

Peggy Fuller
Social Studies Teacher
Maury High School
Norfolk, VA

Inducing, Writing, and *The Scarlet Letter*

To facilitate the writing of a paper analyzing symbolism in *The Scarlet Letter*, I adapted this approach that allowed students to go from the specific to the general, beginning with an analysis of details in order to draw conclusions.

1. On index cards, the students recorded passages from the novel containing references to nature and society: light and dark, sunshine and shadow, characters, setting (architecture, clothing), and colors.
2. Then they categorized the cards, noting the category on the top line of the card and separating them into piles.
3. Then they divided sheets of paper into two columns, with a category atop each column.
4. On these sheets, they listed the key point about each card in a column, trying to reach a conclusion about the connection between the symbol and the category.
5. The next step was to attempt to synthesize these statements into a thesis, such as "Hawthorne uses symbol(s) to _____."
6. Finally, in putting together the paper, some of the categories were broad enough to be paragraphs; others were combined. The columns were used to determine the major details.
7. Students had to be able to state the connection of each category to the thesis.
8. To put the paper together, students worked on an introduction, conclusion, and incorporating quotes and documentation.

The assignment was not a simple one, but the result was that students who had never written a literary analysis before had now completed one. It provided all students with the task of working with primary sources material and arriving at general conclusions through analysis of specific details.

A. M. Tarr
English Teacher
Granby High School
Norfolk, VA

Bethel's Best Sellers

"What's a good book to read?" Students are always asking this, but they do not always trust my answers as well as they do the answers of their peers. So I decided to find out what their peers were reading.

I sent a note to each English teacher asking him/her to poll students for the best book they had read in 1986. The lists came back to my sixth-period remedial class. They alphabetized the list on the computer data base (index cards would work as well). They also had to use the card catalog to look up unnamed authors.

The final list, with the number of nominations for each book, was displayed in the library to give suggestions to students for reading. The top ten favorites (Bethel's Best Sellers) were featured on a library bulletin board made by my students.

This activity interested the entire school in reading and fostered good relations with the librarians. My students were delighted to be "in charge" of the survey, and they did a lot of work without even realizing it.

Sharon Hurwitz
English Teacher
Bethel High School
Hampton, VA

Fresh Media

Students often respond to the challenge of a new medium. Last year a group of my inner-city students tried writing and producing an anti-alcohol abuse rap and video. It took six weeks, quantities of coaxing, and sneaky English lessons whenever they became bogged down in the writing process (meter, rhyme, syntax, grammar, etc.). The result—a dynamic video tape which electrified the student body.

> . . . I'm talking to young teenagers and talkin' live,
> You're at the age right now, don't drink and drive.
> Because you hold your life in a little can,
> You think if you drink alcohol you'll be a man. . .
> Don't Drink!. . .
>
> (Forlang Spencer)

This year, Mrs. Stevenson, our reading specialist, persuaded students to do "book reports" in unusual ways. One student chose the rap style to record his impressions of a book about slavery.

> . . . Get whipped in the evening for doin' wrong.
> Then wake up in the mornin', an' find your mother's gone.
> Your daddy was bad, and he was bold.
> Now your father's been shot, and your mother's been sold.
>
> (Dwainell Washington)

Doing unconventional things with the English language involves risk-taking. Creativity is worth that risk.

Katharine Auld Breece
Social Studies Teacher
Campostella Middle School
Norfolk, VA

Opinion Journals in Social Studies

Journal writing without direction can become tedious and non-productive In response and in order to fulfill curriculum requirements to cover current events and critical thinking skills, I have devised an Opinion Journal that has worked well for my inner city students.

Newspaper articles and editorials are read to prepare the students for this activity. Students may be asked to underline important facts or find the **who, what, when, where, why/how** in the articles. At times I provide every student with the same article. At other times students are asked to find their own. In order to give the class *think time* before writing, we may brainstorm pros and cons of the issue; then students are asked to write their opinions. At other times I will ask them to write their opinions first in order to give them *think time* for class discussion. A typical question might be, "What do you think about the proposed drug testing for all middle school students?"

In order for this type of activity to be productive, we, as teachers, must be willing to spend time on our feet reading over *every* student's shoulder, prompting each one, asking questions about decision criteria, carefully listening to each student's response, and showing students that the oral response can be turned into written words, phrases and sentences with clear meaning. This may take only a few seconds for some students and a minute or two for others.

Think of the benefits! No content teaching time is lost. The student get needed practice in synthesizing material, extracting ideas from their minds and placing them on paper. The very act of writing can help some students with sorting, organizing, and prioritizing skills. The student is given an opportunity to process and express ideas in *his own language*.

Clear expression of ideas and opinions is my primary goal. I try to emphasize to my students that grammar, spelling, punctuation, and syntax are devices to help clarity of expression, but just that—devices. Only when I cannot understand a student's ideas, do I question his mechanics. My students know that these writings are for *them*.

Katharine Auld Breece
Social Studies Teacher
Campostella Middle School
Norfolk, VA

Reviews

John H. Bushman and Kay Parks Bushman. *Teaching English Creatively*. Charles C. Thomas, Springfield, Ill., 1986, 209 pp., $27.25. Reviewed by Joyce Smoot.

Book Review Quiz.

Pick one. Are you:

a. A new English teacher who's feeling overwhelmed by the enormous task of increasing the literacy skills of a large group of students?

b. An experienced English teacher who's always on the lookout for new ideas, but who doesn't have much extra time?

Scoring: Both answers are acceptable.

Whether you answered a or b (or made up your own non-conforming answer), your reward is the same: read the Bushmans' book. The authors give sound, practical advice, and they give it succinctly, discussing theory briefly, then suggesting activities that follow theory. As the authors emphasize in the Preface, this is not a scholarly textbook but an easy-to-read and useful source, intended as informal.

All the important subdivisions of English are covered; there are chapters on literature, writing, language, reading, and thinking skills. Oral work, which is sometimes given less emphasis in English class, is also discussed. Each of these chapters includes suggestions for specific activities for classroom use; and these are not just lists of isolated exercises, but well-explained activities, theoretically justified.

For example, in the chapter on language, the usage section begins with a brief but informed and sensible discussion of the concept of right vs. wrong in language. The first usage exercise consists of a number of statements followed by descriptions of situations; the students are to discuss the appropriateness of the statements in the various situations. Clearly, this is not the old fill-in-the-blank approach to usage.

Similarly, the writing chapter includes discussions of the writing process, non-graded writing, and focused writing; the activities help students develop an eye for detail and foster imaginative development of ideas. The literature chapter demonstrates a similar awareness of current theory: its primary emphasis is on teaching students to become actively involved with literature, not on making them junior critics.

In addition to the chapters on the subject area subdivisions, the authors include chapters on curriculum design, classroom climate, and group interaction procedures. Also included are briefer discussions of testing, homework, discipline, and communication with administrators and parents. Obviously, not all of these topics are discussed in depth, and much of the information will be familiar to experienced teachers, but even they

will probably find it useful to check their ideas against those presented here.

Experienced teachers will probably find the activities sections the most helpful part of the book. Many of these suggestions are based on past work, so you could spend hours paging through back issues of NCTE publications to find similar suggestions, instead of reviewing this one source. If you choose the latter (clearly the right answer), you'll find that the Bushmans do, as the title states, emphasize teaching English creatively and that they do so pleasantly and thoughtfully.

Joyce Smoot
directs the Writing Lab at Virginia Tech.

Anne Wescott Dodd. *From Images to Words: A Visual Approach to Writing*. J. Weston Walch, Publisher, Portland, Maine, 1986, 150 pp., $11.95. Reviewed by Jane Lamb.

In this up-beat, user-friendly handbook, Anne Dodd approaches the reluctant writer with practical common sense: take students where you find them and carry on from there. She recognizes that many teenagers have spent thousands of hours watching TV and relatively few reading and writing and thus may quite understandably be terrified by the prospect of filling a blank piece of paper with words. She introduces them to the process of writing by beginning with the familiar world of the visual.

This is no sugar-coated program, however. Though each chapter is based on photographs, the writing assignments are thoughtfully designed and thorough. Chapter One is a warm-up based on free writing, but students are immediately directed to keep all their writings, however rough and incomplete, in a folder, and to keep a journal of their observations and ideas. Chapter Two makes use of a long photographic shot and detailed close-ups to teach paragraph structure. Here also are introduced revision, final draft, and "When Your Final Copy Comes Back from the Publisher," which requires entering all misspelled words in a personal dictionary and establishing a "No Errors" folder where all grammatical mistakes are recorded, with the correct rules written beside them. In successive chapters photographs help students to understand and use literary devices such as metaphor, imagery and point of view, and writing techniques like clustering, parallel construction, and comparison and contrast. Eventually students move from paragraph to essay and learn how to apply their new knowledge to answering essay questions in all subjects.

Although photographs are used as starters throughout, Dodd quickly moves students on to exercising their mind's eye and reminds them regularly to keep up their journals and personal dictionaries. "Writer's Workshops" where students share their writing and help each other are important to

the regimen, and the idea of publication is constantly stressed. While "publication" often means handing a paper to the teacher, Dodd offers a long list of suggestions for in-school and even professional publishing possibilities. An appendix for students includes cleverly stated rules for writing and useful checklists. An appendix for teachers provides notes on individual chapters and small-group training exercises. A bibliography lists further helpful material.

From Images to Words is based on Anne Dodd's many years of success teaching unmotivated high school students to write. It would work equally well in introducing writing to competent middle school students. The book's non-threatening but disciplined method and its understanding of the student's point of view make it such a valuable teaching tool that the rather poor quality of the photographic reproductions is only a minor distraction.

Jane Lamb
teaches in Brunswick, ME

June Cottrell. *Creative Drama in the Classroom: Grades 1-3.* National Textbook Company, Lincolnwood, IL, 1987, 242 pp., $19.95. Reviewed by LuAn Keller.

June Cottrell's text is "designed to be a teacher's resource book that provides extensive assistance in doing drama with children in the early elementary grades." There are many other texts on the market with similar goals, and her book is notable in some ways and not in others.

Creative Drama in the Classroom covers the role of the classroom teacher as drama leader, how to begin to do drama, how to develop the necessary drama skills, how to use drama to illuminate the standard curriculum, the relationship between the mass media and children, and how to write lesson plans for drama sessions. It is a thorough and basic how-to guide to drama with definitions, methods, and practical advice.

For instance, in the "Getting Started" chapter, a variety of tools are described that will arouse and stimulate the children's interest. Cottrell lists poetry, games, sounds and sound pictures, props, guided fantasies and others. She makes sure the reader knows what the activity is and how to introduce it, use it, and make a transition out of it. In other chapters she includes sample drama lessons and the techniques of story dramatization. She shows how lessons in science, social studies, current events and other subject areas may be dramatized. She includes essays on doing drama with special populations. She deals with the "demystification of the media through drama" and discusses fantasy and its relationship to reality. She closes the book with suggestions for writing unit plans and a list of other resources including films, anthologies of prose and poetry, and an index of games and exercises.

A major feature of her book is a notable rationale for creative drama in the classroom. "...there are people," she writes, "who would hesitate to endorse theatre arts education in the K-12 curriculum unless you are

willing and able to articulate academically defensible goals and objectives." She goes on to provide arms against a sea of skeptics.

Yet what does this book offer to the field? The terminology is intimidating and often confusing, making things sound very difficult. The prose is stiff. The book gives plenty of "how-to's" but hardly any "why's." The book lacks its own poetry or passion. Her book is all bones and no breath.

For a document on the goals and objectives of drama in the classroom, I suggest "Philosophy, Scope and Sequence for a Model Drama/Theatre Curriculum, K-12," available from Anchorage Press. For a better written, warmer and easier to read drama text, I recommend Ruth Beall Heinig's *Creative Drama Resource Book* or Geraldine Brain Siks' *Drama in the Classroom*.

LuAn Keller
is an M.F.A. candidate in Child Drama at Virginia Tech.

Fillmer Hevener, Jr. *Hot Tips for Student Teachers*. R & E Publishers, Saratoga, California, 1985, 55 pp., $4.95. Reviewed by Charlotte P. Sellers.

Student teaching has long been recognized by educators as the most significant phase of a teacher preparation program. It is that chance for prospective teachers to apply methods and theory in a practical, realistic setting. Hevener's *Hot Tips for Student Teachers* acknowledges the importance of the student teaching experience and shows appreciation for the student teacher's perspective as a newcomer to the profession, with loads of questions but few answers. Hevener effectively voices the concerns and questions that so many student teachers share.

The book is basically 117 questions with answers that range from the basic question, "What is student teaching?" to a discussion of what impact teaching and teachers have made on the lives of some of America's greats such as Helen Keller and Omar Bradley. The small volume manages to balance the philosophical with the practical by pondering "what is the ultimate purpose of education," as well as responding to such basic concerns of the student teacher as to how many classes he/she will carry as an intern or whether or not the student teacher will be paid for services during this internship. To the veteran teacher the answers to such questions would be obvious, but Hevener has carefully captured the student teacher perspective with its honest question about what rewards may await a professional educator.

Hevener's work is honest but not intimidating in indicating the demands teaching, and student teaching particularly, can make on one's time and energy. In his brief volume he is able to acquaint the student teacher with the need for professionalism through his discussions of confidentiality and suggestions of professional journals that might assist them in their particular fields of teaching.

Reading *Hot Tips for Student Teachers* reminds me of my reading years

ago of *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Sex But Were Afraid to Ask*. The more experienced on the topic at hand may realize the book does not contain "everything" that relates to the subject, but it certainly contains plenty of answers to the curious novice.

As prospective teachers contemplate a major commitment to the teaching profession, they are sure to have questions. This book is successful in capturing the perspective of the student teacher in determining many of those questions. It is a valuable introduction to the business of student teaching, and it is a tool that can aid them throughout the experience with inclusion of such ideas as a four-part self-evaluation that the student teacher can use to appraise performance and target specific areas of strength and areas in need of improvement. Hevener has helped to make student teaching less a trial by fire by anticipating concerns of the student teacher and offering straightforward, informative answers to those questions.

Charlotte Sellers
is a supervisor for the Montgomery County, Virginia, School System.

H. Elaine Kirn. *Everyday Spelling Workbook*. National Textbook Co., Lincolnwood, IL, 1986, $4.95. Reviewed by Patricia Price.

Spelling has often been referred to as the "stepchild" of the English curriculum and frequently with good cause. Many of us who instruct older students are puzzled as to how we may teach our language's orthography with its exceptions and irregularities to those who did not master the basic spelling skills in earlier grades. Some of us teach spelling along with vocabulary as a separate subject, relying on our own word lists since commercial spelling kits for high school students are not widely used. Others "teach spelling" solely by marking misspelled words in students' compositions with an "sp."

The introduction of the *Everyday Spelling Workbook* seems to offer a solution for the secondary teacher's dilemma of how to teach spelling to the older student. This text is described as a spelling workbook "intended for use by adult and young adult students, both native and non-native" with challenging and motivating exercises which can be used for both individualized and whole-class instruction. This sounds promising. However, an evaluation of a spelling text should take into consideration not only its content and methodology but also whether or not the text incorporates those practices recommended by current research—especially the practices regarding the use of phonics, the selection of words to be studied, and the teaching of rules.

The *Everyday Spelling Workbook* is divided into twelve lessons which examine the sound-letter relationships of our language, using only one-syllable words. Each lesson after the first provides some review of previous material, and every third lesson is entirely review and summary. Five tests

are provided with the workbook as well as a cassette tape which is necessary if the program is used for individualized learning. Essentially, each lesson presents two types of activities—aural exercises and vocabulary exercises in various forms, including games and puzzles.

This workbook does not rely on the traditional memorization of word lists; rather a student learns words as examples of phonological rules. First, the student learns a phonological rule, and then he listens to the tape or his teacher pronounce one-syllable words which incorporate the sound-letter relationships being studied. The student then fills in blanks to complete the spelling of the spoken word which also corresponds to a cartoon-like illustration. Thirty-seven sound symbols are taught along with approximately forty phonics generalizations. For example, in Lesson Seven the student learns that "the o sound is usually spelled *o*. Before *l* and after *w* and *qu*, it is spelled *a*. It is sometimes spelled *aw*, especially at the end of a word." The student would then listen to the pronunciation of several examples and then complete the spelling of "——ff" (off), "b—ld" (bald"), and "h—k" (hawk) by using both auditory and visual cues. Other activities, such as puzzles and dictionary work, are included in each lesson, and the teacher's guide provides some brief suggestions for remedial activities as well as for incorporating spelling with other language skills.

This workbook relies heavily upon phonics as a single approach to teach the basic principles and patterns of English spelling, and herein lies its major weakness. Noted theorists in spelling, such as Rruel Allred, explain that, although phonics is useful, it should not be taught as the sole means for spelling mastery because our language is not completely consistent in its sound-letter relationships. The *Everyday Spelling Workbook* does attempt, for the most part, to avoid teaching words which violate the approximately forty phonics generalizations it makes, but in doing so, this text also may lead non-native speakers of English to believe our language is more regular than it really is.

Another interesting irony to this text's emphasis on phonics to teach spelling to older students is a recent study by Sharon Templeton which suggests that a general knowledge of spelling structure may often come before "higher order phonological knowledge." In other words, a student's knowledge of orthography may become the basis for his analyzing phonology instead of vice versa, and this knowledge comes from the whole language exercises of reading and writing. If so, then the *Everyday Spelling Workbook*'s approach may not be pedagogically suitable for certain students.

This text may also be handicapped in its ability to teach spelling because of its use of only one-syllable words to teach sound-letter relationships. Most spelling books incorporate the teaching of high-frequency words from traditional lists (Dolch, Fitzgerald, etc,) as a springboard for developing general spelling ability and word recognition. This workbook's one-syllable constraint eliminates many of the traditional high-frequency words useful for expanding the vocabulary of a non-native speaker of English. Perhaps

the greatest weakness is that the reliance on one-syllable words to teach spelling precludes instruction about prefixes, suffixes, or changes in spelling because of inflected endings; knowledge of these is necessary in order to study structural relationships among words.

Additionally, the text's reliance on approximately forty phonics generalizations runs counter to current research findings which suggest that the presentation of numerous rules is not a very effective way to teach spelling. Depending upon which theorist one reads, only about 10-25 phonics rules have been identified as being applicable 77-100% of the time. Furthermore, many agree that students should be taught inductively about sound-letter relationships; as part of their natural language use, they can develop their own hypotheses. One especially valuable method to facilitate this is to encourage students to do a great deal of writing. Then, as part of the editing and conferencing processes, students can be led to discover generalizations about spelling and to construct lists of misspelled words from their own work. Although the *Everyday Spelling Workbook* does suggest some additional writing activities as a way of combining spelling with other skills, these composition exercises are viewed as a "quiet contrast to oral phonics," and their main purpose seems to be the discovery and correction of spelling errors.

Thus, the use of the *Everyday Spelling Workbook* by itself seems to be of limited value. The teaching of spelling should not be taught as an isolated subskill nor should it depend entirely upon one approach. Teachers should use a variety of methods, materials, and activities, especially writing, to allow students to learn intuitively about the sound-letter relationships of our language. If this text was integrated into an entire language study program, perhaps it might prove useful as a way to introduce the study of basic phonics to certain older students and provide them with one more tool to understand and master our system of English spelling.

Patricia Price
teaches English at Shawsville Middle and High School.

Your VATE Officers

Chris Hopkins
President

I am a teacher, like you, of young people. My teaching experiences over the past twenty years have enabled me to read and reread the classics, to plan and redesign diverse units of study, and to work with the written and spoken word, my personal favorite area of language arts. Teaching young people continues to be an eye-opening and stimulating adventure. Each year's classrooms usher in new fads in clothing, hair styles, and language idioms. While I am imparting textbook referenced skills to my students, they are reeducating me about their world.

I am also a mother of a teenager. I honestly believe every teacher of adolescents should have the experience of coping, advising, communicating, debating, etc. with a teenager preparing to leave the "nest." If you have not had the opportunity, I encourage you to "adopt a teen" for a 24-hour period. It will not only raise your consciousness, but will also give you a keener perspective on adolescence. Perhaps it could replace Education 101.

These two roles are nearly all-encompassing; however, I do find time for other activities, such as reading, biking, walking on the beach, collecting recipes, speculating in the stock market, gardening, aerobics, and tennis. Additionally, I am a wife who has a very understanding husband. (He's memorized the phone number of the local pizza delivery store.)

VATE has become a very special organization for me. I have enjoyed working with teachers across the state. Closer to home, my local affiliate has provided a professionally nourishing climate for involvement. I feel grateful to all of you for allowing me to grow with you.

Virgil Davala
Secondary Member-at-Large

From my earliest years, I wanted to be a teacher, though my decision to major in English was not made until my sophomore year in college. In fact, I began my freshman year as a chemistry major. As my interest in literature, writing, and communication was nurtured, though, language soon became my first interest. Perhaps it is not surprising that this year finds me teaching ninth grade English at Fairfax County's Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology.

I have always enjoyed teaching, but only recently have I come to understand the meaning of the professionalism it offers, for several reasons. My involvement in VATE and ETA-NV now provides an ever-expanding network of friends with whom to share and grow.

My participation in the Northern Virginia Writing Project helps me continue to clarify my role as a teacher and learner. Most important, my husband Dick's encouragement helps me to meet my professional and personal goals. A teacher of seventh grade history who is himself active in the Fairfax and Virginia Education Associations, he is my constant support.

Together Dick and I meet our professional responsibilities, including travel to conferences and conventions, and enjoy time with our two wonderful sons, Doug, eleven, and Danny, nine. In our leisure hours, we like to listen to music, dance, socialize with friends, and travel with our family. We especially are looking forward to this summer's planned vacation, a cross-country drive to Los Angeles.

Edgar H. (Herb) Thompson
College Member-at-Large

During my teaching career, I've taught at a Chinese middle school, taught English as a second language in Southeast Asia, and taught high school English and reading in Prince William and Montgomery Counties, Virginia. I now spend my time training future elementary teachers at Emory & Henry College to teach reading and writing, a job I especially like doing. I like to write, and in addition to writing professional articles, I like to write poetry. I also like to paint watercolors when I can find the time.

I'm proud to be the VATE college member-at-large, but I do not want to be perceived as someone who only has college interests at heart. I'm concerned about the teaching of language arts K-20, and I am particularly troubled that the public still does not have a clear picture of what English and language arts teachers do in their classrooms. The VATE membership at all levels has the knowledge and the expertise to educate the public about what constitutes quality reading and writing instruction. I hope we can all find productive ways—individually, locally, and through VATE—to share this information with the various public constituencies we answer to.

Elizabeth Barber
Elementary Member-at-Large

Rheumatic fever kept me in for much of my early childhood. Devoted family members spent many hours entertaining me with books or art projects, but when I was well enough, I would go out with Grandaddy Boone to pick up my grandmother from work some afternoons. To pass the time as we waited for her, Grandaddy kept pencil and paper in the glove compartment of his '35 Ford. We would "write," his hand covering my little one as we scratched out the letters B-A-B-Y. Years later, when I was well and he lay gravely ill, I stapled drawings and scribbles together, making little "books" to cheer him up. After he died I found those little "books," each one dated in his shaky hand, alongside a lock of my hair, in a shoebox with my name on it. I still have it. The printed word, reading and writing: these were the treasures we gave back and forth to each other.

In school I met many other teachers, some as gifted as my first one. Louise Taylor told us wonderful stories about The Three Musketeers and The Count of Monte Cristo. Lois DeMasters made history and geography leap off the fifth grade textbook pages. Twenty years later I came back to her classroom to practice my art under the tutelage of a true master.

Sometimes today I think about how it would be had I, like a sister, become a stock broker, or, like a brother, taken a career in sales. With four children depending on us, it is difficult for a teacher and a social worker to make ends meet. Then I remember about the gifts given and received, then given all over again to another generation.

I sing of the class of the year two thousand
Of the stuff dreams are made on
And the road not taken
Of children playing on the Singing Tree
And the faint, smothered laugh in the hall.
I feel the times trans-shifting, and I think
Of what bread they will eat
And what wine they will drink
And I want to do nothing for a long time but listen.
Then I dream of the voices of a thousand singers
Of cloud-capped visions put down in crayon
While the hope of the future makes books of lined paper
I know there's no hell, only heaven
And I have it after all.